

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing today with great concern that the draft legislation to establish a National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for all Health Professionals by July 2010 presents a very serious infraction of the rights of women to make choices about their health care during pregnancy and birth. If private practice midwives are unable to register, making it illegal for them to attend homebirths, I believe that the human rights of women and babies are threatened. I see it as a possible contravention of the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the United Nations Statement on the Rights of Women (1995), which states “**Women have the right to have control over, and decide freely and responsibly on all matters relating to their sexual and reproductive health**”.

Childbirth is a peak experience in a woman's life and it is my opinion, having spoken to many women that the birthing experience strongly influences a woman's feeling of empowerment and ability to mother. My husband and I have five children. We are both university educated. Home birth would have been our first choice for the birth of our first child. As we could not afford the fee at the time we used the public system in NSW and were fortunate to have a home birth midwife attend us in the hospital, as I labored during her one shift she worked at Lismore Base Hospital. I may well have been shunted to the operating theater had it not been for her calm and expert assistance. My subsequent 3 births were at a birthing centre, under the supervision of a doctor who was a pioneer of home birthing in the 1970s. These births required only minimal assistance from midwives and were excellent experiences. Home birth was still desired but financially unviable. My fifth birth in WA (Denmark) I elected to undergo at home without assistance because birth was not offered in my home town and I did not wish to risk a birth in the back of the car. As happened, I did require assistance. When I presented in emergency at Denmark Hospital a midwife was on duty and in a short period of time I was delivered of a 10lb 11oz boy without any further complications. This too was an amazing experience. Although I never had a home birth, I know many who have and I consider it the ideal birthing experience. I chose not to have home births for financial reasons. I am glad I had the right to such a choice. It would be a heinous infringement of a mother's rights to choose, and the unborn child's right to a peaceful non-traumatic entry into this fraught world, to legislate out the possibility of being legally tended by a registered home birth midwife.

Please support home birth midwives.

Giselle Jennaway

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