

## **Submission to the enquiry into midwifery practice in Australia**

I am writing to express my significant distress and concern at moves that would make it illegal for midwives to practice without indemnity insurance.

The effect of such legislation would be to make midwife supported homebirths inaccessible. I am the mother of three children, two of whom were born at home with the support of extraordinarily skilled and caring midwives.

My first child, Hannah was born in hospital in a midwifery case management model. Whilst I was generally very pleased with the care I received from the known midwife who attended my birth, I was also aware that I underwent a number of procedures which were neither medically necessary or beneficial to me or my baby. After four days of pre-labour and labour, my daughter was born vaginally and without need for suturing. I left hospital 12 hours after the birth.

One of the things that most impressed me after this birth was the post birth follow up that I received at home because I had left hospital early. This support far exceeded anything that had been delivered to me at the hospital and was one of the reasons that I decided to have a home birth for my second baby.

My son Xavier was born at home as was my second daughter Anouk. The experience of giving birth at home is quite extraordinary. Furthermore, I am certain that I had better birth outcomes than had I been in hospital. Xavier was born weighing 4.4kg with a head circumference of 38cm. His birth was long and difficult involving shoulder dystocia. The midwives handled this situation with extraordinary skill and demonstrated their absolute ability to remain calm and in control of what I subsequently recognised must have been a very difficult situation for them. I have little doubt that had this situation occurred in hospital it would have resulted in a much more panicked and ultimately stressful and traumatic experience for me and my son.

My enduring memory of the birth of my daughter Anouk, who was born to my partner Kate, is that of her older siblings coming downstairs early in the morning minutes after she was born. The looks of delight on their faces and that priceless time that we had together is not something that a hospital birth could ever have offered us. Also present were my mother, partner's mother and of course our midwives.

When my partner and I decided to have home births, we were aware that midwives were practicing without insurance. Whilst I did not see this as ideal, my concern was more for the position that this placed the midwives in rather than seeing it as any reflection on their ability to offer me and my baby the very best level of care.

My strong preference is for a hospital supported home birth service. This choice is available to millions of women in other developed countries. Australia, which prides itself on a first class health system, is clearly lagging in this area. Homebirth is a safe and legitimate choice that should be available in a state supported system.

Susan Rennie

Homebirth is not for everyone but a system that denies women this choice actually puts people at risk. There is little doubt that some women will continue to have babies at home, regardless of the state of the law and the proposed changes may result in more women making this choice without the assistance of qualified and skilled support. Alternatively women may be more reluctant to transfer to hospital fearing the potential ramifications.

I urge you to reject the proposition that midwifery practice without insurance be made illegal. Instead, I strongly encourage you to consider moves to implement hospital supported home birth services.

Yours sincerely

Susan Rennie (DSW)