

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

Please allow Australian families to continue to have the choice of Home Birth (ie provide indemnity insurance to allow independent midwives / experienced birth carers ability to continue practice)

In between getting a major piece of work out for a client, writing and presenting a paper at scientific conference – my first in a 3 years, trying to run a small business and make some money and participate in the life of my family and friends.

I am writing this submission because I feel that a woman's right to choose where and with whom she births should be supported by the Australian health system.

I am educated (Honours Degree and a post graduate certificate as well). I look after my health – I exercise – I practice yoga and pilates (as often as I can – maybe 1-2 times a week, I walk a lot – give me a break I am a mum!) , I eat really quite healthily – although my relationship with the Australian wine industry is an amorous affair – though in daily moderation – typically 1 glass) I even have health insurance for hospital and extras just in case and because my husband's body is not so robust as mine. SO essentially I'm seeking to demonstrate that I am a responsible person – who looks after the health of my body (and my baby).

I am also a mother who was fortunate enough to have a great birth (I feel I am unfortunately in the minority in this). I am also aware enough to know that that my great birth didn't happen by chance but because of my health and most particularly the amazing midwives, doulas and birth support people that I came in to contact with during my pregnancy who asked me to consider the alternatives to the mainstream route (ie lets consider not choosing a private hospital because of the higher intervention/caesarean rates – even though I had top private hospital cover). AND these women very importantly supported and nourished Dean (my husband) and my journey from no idea about pregnancy and birth to empowered birthing mum (and dad empowered too).

I believe that birth can be FABULOUS - with the right support. Birthing at home especially for supported, low risk women is a really great option, if you're within a reasonable proximity of a hospital should the need arise.

Even though I'm not yet pregnant and don't know what I'll personally choose for my next birth. I would like to know that I and others had the CHOICE.

I do believe that home birth is safe. I felt and feel extremely confident of the passionate and highly informed women who supported me and my husband – and a core part of our support was from independent birth supporters who worked INDEPENDENTLY of the public hospital system.

AND I'm positive of the benefits for the baby of minimised intervention (and avoided use of drugs) with benefits including: improved attachment, breastfeeding, happier mum, happier home, able to go home so much sooner – I know it sounds bizarre (because it is not so common with our current birth practices) but that night. I strongly believe that the chances of having an intervention free birth increase when the mother feels in a SAFE place, and which if she is confident of her state of health and in her health care providers can very realistically be her HOME.

Some particular reasons for why I might personally consider a home birth (and realistically I think that mainly women who have already had one birth would choose this option) are that my labour with Stella (now 1 and 3/4 yrs) was around 8 hours long. This was not such a long time for me. I was able to use mind, movement and water to manage the surges (yes we didn't call it pain) and putting in place structures and instructions for keeping my birthing space 'safe' and how I wanted it -a relaxing

sanctuary even though I chose to give birth in a birth suite at the public hospital – having these TOOLS at my disposal (ALL TAUGHT I might add by INDEPENDENT BIRTH SUPPORT PEOPLE – whom I paid for their services – I paid a doula \$900 for pre, during and post care; I paid a counsellor for hypno birthing – 2 sessions at \$70 each; an active birth workshop at \$50 per couple and prenatal yoga classes at \$15 per class) anyway these tools meant for me never any thought to ask for intervention or pain relief drugs – which as many women preparing for birth will say is what they would like to avoid – unfortunately many don't achieve that.

ANYWAY the bottom line is... I am a responsible person. I had a great birth. I had a great birth because of INDEPENDENT birth support that me and my husband received - and because I am a person that does take responsibility for making things happen – I am prepared to stand up for what I believe in. I believe that home birth is a safe option when supported by knowledgeable birth support people. AND I want you to support me and other Australian women from whatever walk of life in having the CHOICE to birth their baby at home AND being supported by INDEPENDENT midwives and other MIDWIVES in that choice.

I hope that you will hear me.

And why do I know a bit about birthing.. Well I was so passionate after my birth that I got involved with a local group calling who had successfully lobbied for a birth centre in Townsville. And we produced a full colour calendar to celebrate it opening last year – a project which I was instrumental in managing. I believe that positive births empower women and their families and gives the new baby the best possible home life into which to come into the world. Supporting women, choosing how they want to birth is Instrumental in this.

PLEASE FIND A WAY TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENT MIDWIVES AND OTHERS TO SUPPORT BIRTH IN A HOME ENVIRONMENT ie provide indemnity insurance/cover. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME and I BELIEVE THAT A HEALTH SYSTEM THAT CARES FOR OPTIMAL BIRTH OUTCOMES MUST NOT ONLY ALLOW THIS BUT SUPPORT THIS.

The BATTLE for women's birth choices needs to end. It is the outcome that WOMEN WANT. The solution is to FIND A WAY to make it happen.

Yours sincerely

Sandy McCathie (mother of Stella 1 ¾ yrs)