

Thursday 6th August 2009
Leonie MacDonald

To the Committee Secretary

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

RE: Inquiry into National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Doctors and Other Health Workers

I am writing to express my concerns about the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Health Professionals. It is my understanding that, when combined with the proposed Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills, private midwives will be unable to access medical indemnity insurance and will therefore be unable to register as health professionals.

I am very upset by this outcome. It has a significant impact on patient care and safety. It will restrict women's choice in maternity care to midwife or obstetric care within a medical setting. The scheme and Bills will deny women the choice of a safe home birth with a qualified and registered midwife. Only a small number of families will be affected, however this does not make it an acceptable outcome.

I am concerned that some women will feel pushed into birthing at home without the care of a midwife because they will not wish to place themselves in hospital care for an uncomplicated labour. I believe this is may be a risky and undesirable situation for mother and baby.

I am concerned because I would like a home birth under the care of a private midwife if I were to have another baby. I gave birth to my second child in a home water birth in Canberra in May 2009. My son was born in a 6 hour labour which was pain-free, drug-free, intervention-free and totally natural. This home birth was uncomplicated and safe.

We chose a home water birth for our second child because we wanted to be at home and not hospital. We wanted consistent one-to-one pre and post-natal care with a trusted and skilled independent midwife who would also be our carer during labour. From research I had learned that women who feel safe, have confidence in their bodies and trust their carers have more efficient and less painful births. We decided that having our baby at home under the care of the right midwife would be the way to have the best birth possible. My first child was born under the midwife program at Calvary Hospital in 2006 – a long and challenging birth primarily because I did not feel safe or relaxed in a hospital setting attended to by strangers.

For our home birth we chose a skilled, experienced and compassionate midwife (Marie Heath RM.RN.CFHN.Cert.FPA of Midwyf Services) and doula (Margie Perkins GradDipCBE of New Lives). Their care and support throughout pregnancy, birth and the post-natal period was exceptional. It far exceeded the quality of care and support I received from Calvary Hospital antenatal clinic, maternity ward, care from ACT Maternal and Child Health Nurses for my first child in: hours of face to face contact, after hours availability, ongoing support, personal caring, consistency and up-to-date advice based on research, experience and empathy. After such a high level of care and a wonderful birth, I would not choose to birth any other way for a normal uncomplicated labour. I am amazed that

the government is considering legislation that will take away my ability to access the highest quality maternity care available. I am amazed insurance and registration laws could take away women's rights to choose.

Independent midwives like Marie Heath travel thousands of kilometres to bring quality midwifery to families in their homes, birth centres and hospitals. I will be devastated to see Marie forced out of the profession because of insurance and registration laws next year.

Please help independent homebirth midwives to register as health professionals from July 2010. Please do not take away women's rights to choose amongst the full spectrum of safe, high quality maternity care.

Yours sincerely,

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ACT Government Primary Teacher
Mother of two