

Dear Sir or Madam

We are sorry that we have missed the deadline for submissions to your inquiry, but just wanted to put on record our support for homebirth as an option for women in Australia. Therefore we support national registration schemes that support independent midwives offering that choice, and would be aghast if the implementation of a scheme, advertently or inadvertently, resulted in such an option not being offered. All our four children were born at home: Pieta (now aged 12), Cassiel (10), Thelonious (8) and Pascale (5). The first three in Darwin, the youngest in Melbourne, all with the support of independent midwives. The birth experience was uniformly good, and the care exceptional. We are fully supportive of professional health care; I am an occupational therapist and my partner is a medical practitioner. But we both feel that low risk birth should not be treated as an illness, but that hospital care should be there as a backup in case it is needed for an unforeseen complication.

If indemnity insurance is made a requirement for midwives nationally, then the Commonwealth Government should provide such indemnity to independent midwives based on demonstrated competency, as such indemnity is unavailable in the private market. If homebirth is not available through registered midwives, the reality is that many women will still choose to birth at home either unsupported or with the help of non-registered midwives – this will likely worsen outcomes for mothers and newborns.

Respectfully yours

Karen Weeramanthri and Tarun Weeramanthri