

Dear Senate Inquiry re Medicare for Midwives Legislation

Please find below my submission:

I am deeply disappointed at the proposed lack of support for independent midwives and as such am repeating my request that you support women who choose to give birth at home with an independent midwife.

As you are no doubt aware the World Health Organisation recognises midwives as:
"the most appropriate and cost effective type of health care provider to be assigned to the care of women in normal pregnancy and birth,"
They do not specify where this care is to take place.

In addition the United Nations states:
"the human rights of women include their right to have control over, and to decide freely and responsibly on, all matters related to their sexual and reproductive health"

Therefore in the interests:

- of honouring each individual's human rights,
- in providing true choice for birthing women
- of lessening the burden on the public health system

I ask you again to support women who choose to give birth at home with an independent midwife.

My husband and I chose a homebirth for our son because we trust birth is a natural process with all the risks and benefits associated with it. We chose our midwife, a highly qualified and experienced practitioner, knowing she understood and respected our wishes and that we could trust her judgement. She was with us for our entire pregnancy, birth and post natal journey – she came to the hospital with us (we transferred on her recommendation), she was with us through hospital shift changes and she was with us during the subsequent caesarean section. Even though she was unable to provide midwifery services to us once we entered hospital having her support and expertise with us was a huge benefit. To my mind my birth proves that homebirth is safe, that independent midwives are responsible and open to working in a collaborative framework.

If the draft legislation goes ahead my family will be faced with four options:

1. free birth without a care provider which may place me and my baby at risk
2. birth with an unregistered (yet fully qualified and experienced midwife), thus asking the midwife to risk a \$30,000 fine or imprisonment (also the wording of the legislation is at present unclear whether or not my family will also be open to fine or imprisonment)
3. birth within a medical led maternity system that is geared to dealing with large numbers of birthing women as efficiently as possible (within which there is little time available to honour individuals choices and the profound process of birth), that fundamentally believes birth is risky and that is unable to guarantee my family's wishes will be listened to and respected
4. leave the country and birth in New Zealand

I find all these options completely unacceptable.

Therefore, I am asking that the draft legislation be amended to:

- extend the government subsidised insurance currently provided to Obstetrician's, and planing to be provided to 'eligible' midwives, to include independent midwives OR
- allow independent midwives to register and practise without professional indemnity insurance
- that the expenses of a homebirth with an independent midwife be claimable by the mother through the tax system (a method similar to claiming the baby bonus). The maximum amount payable being the value of maternity care in the hospital system where the outcome is vaginal birth without intervention.

Thank you
Paula Bruckard