

MIDWIFE FEEDBACK: Medicare and Insurance for Homebirth Midwives

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I am writing to express my disappointment with the new legislation which is currently being passed, which will soon rob our family of our income and prevent myself and my daughters from deciding where and with whom we will give birth. This legislation makes homebirth illegal despite evidence that homebirth for low-risk women is just as safe, if not safer, than hospital birth.

I am a currently-practicing full-time homebirth midwife in Brisbane. I have a Bachelor of Nursing, a Masters in Midwifery and a Masters in Health Studies (Community Child and Adolescent Health). I have been working as a nurse for the past sixteen years. Over the years, I completed extra study to become a midwife, and then further experience and training to work solely in homebirthing. I have built my own business from scratch and now run a successful small business, being the main income earner for my husband and three children, aged 8, 6 and 3, with another child hoped for next year.

On the other hand, I am also a mother. My first two children were caesarean births, making my chances for a vaginal birth for my third child near impossible in the hospital system. Therefore, after extensive research, I birthed my third child at home on 4th July 2006 with the assistance of a qualified homebirth midwife. I am definitely never going to willingly birth in a hospital ever again.

These new National Registration laws mean that for my next birth, I will be forced to birth unattended at home, because I will not transfer to hospital when my baby and myself are healthy and well. These new laws mean that if my midwife was to attend, she could be facing criminal charges - just for attending my birth. This only serves to make my birth unsafe as you can imagine.

In my professional life, my business is being dismissed. My skills and training are being dismissed. I am being de-skilled by forcing me to choose either to give up all I have worked for, or be forced to work in a hospital. I will never work in a hospital because I will never perform interventions on women during labour and birth that are focussed entirely on the benefit of the institution and are not evidence based. Almost all of my clients are highly intelligent, university educated women who will not accept this care within an institution either. That is why they choose to homebirth with me.

Also, I am insulted that after all my training and experience, I am still going to have to prove myself again in order to gain access to Medicare for my services, as Medicare access is only for "eligible" midwives.

Why is it, that more of my working life is spent fighting for the right to work- and not with my clients? All we are talking about is birthing at home - I am doing nothing that harms anyone, and in fact, my clients are immensely satisfied with my service.

It is not safe to have women birthing at home unattended. Midwives like myself should have the same rights as other midwives. We need access to indemnity insurance and Medicare, just like the others. That way, I can register and continue to practice using the skills I have been trained for.

It is also not fair to close down my familys main source of income. High level research evidence from around the world proves that the service I provide is safe and professional. **Homebirth must be included in the new Medicare and Indemnity Insurance Legislation.**

Regards

Andrea Codega