

Marie-Clare Couper

I wish to make a submission to the Senate Community Affairs committee on behalf of my family.

While we are happy to hear of the positive legislation being put before parliament in regards to providing medical indemnity insurance to Privately practicing midwives etc; we are greatly disturbed to hear that in-effect homebirth is going to become illegal in Australia. We are disturbed for a few reasons.

Firstly, We consider the right to choose where, and with whom you birth to be a basic right which every woman should have. There are a billion reasons why a woman chooses to birth at home (religious, health, social). A minority of women choose to birth at home in Australia. But since when in this country does being a minority equal a lack of rights or a lack of choice?

Secondly. We strongly believe that when a health service becomes outlawed, and in effect sent 'underground' it makes the practice less safe, less transparent, and harder to monitor (e.g. Abortion). This legislation will not stop women from having home births; it will just make homebirth less safe. Women will birth unattended, or with unskilled care providers.

Thirdly. Homebirth has been proven in a multitude of studies to be safe when certain factors are present. Those factors are 1- A qualified registered Midwife. 2- Adequate antenatal care. 3- Low risk pregnancy. Why when this has been proven are we taking steps to make home birth un-safe? Why are we stopping Registered Midwives from attending low risk, well cared for women? Several countries around the world have led the way, and have embraced home-birth as a safe and 'normal' option for childbirth. Their models of care are responsible, and offer an alternative to sending an already marginal health care option underground.

There is much to gain from embracing home birth. The benefits are proven. What have we to gain from sending home birth underground? What do we have to gain from taking a basic human right away from Australian women?

This is an important decision to the people's of Australia, and I urge you to consider the views and rights of these people. It is not that every person would wish to have a home birth. But I assure you that the Australian people defend their right to CHOOSE how and where they give birth. Respect for this right is essential.

I had the right to choose where and with whom I gave birth. Why should my children not have that right too? I write passionately as myself have had 5 wonderful (safe) homebirths. The care I received was priceless. I believe strongly in the importance of care in pregnancy and childbirth to the ongoing health of our communities. I also believe strongly that it is the responsibility of the family to make decisions in regard to their health care, not politicians.

I urge you; the committee to consider carefully the implications this legislation will have on our communities and the rights of their people's.

Yours Sincerely,
Marie-Clare Couper