

Hello there,

My name is Marie Gentile-Andrit. I write in reference to the proposed abolition of an aspect of our current maternity services.

Following a monumental response made by the government in the national budget to the Maternity Services Review, it comes with great disappointment that it sees fit to disrupt an age old practice and pursue an Inquiry into the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills with a prospected outcome of outlawing homebirth in Australia. I find it astounding that since the birth of human life women have been giving birth at home and despite planned homebirth being researched as being associated with the same infant mortality as hospital birth for the 90% of women who are low risk, the government is continuing to make such unfounded changes.

This is not just about women deserving a legislative right to choose homebirth, it's also about maternal and neonatal outcomes. It's about the unnecessary hospitalisation for an otherwise very normal passage of Australian family life. The same Australian family life that is professed to be supported and upheld. How can the Government overlook this? How is this change demonstrating that our policy makers respect the needs of Australian families? How is this supporting freedom of choice? By removing this inherent choice the Government is choosing to ignore the birthing rights of women and families who choose this method of childbirth. In addition to this it is single handedly contributing to the continued medicalisation of childbirth and this is devastatingly worrying for the future of our mothers and babies. Outlawing homebirth will not eradicate the practice. Women who would naturally and instinctively choose homebirth will not suddenly choose to seek care at their local hospital, they will elect to go at it alone. They will forgo the trusted and respected provision of care by a known and trusted midwife/s and take it upon themselves to birth their baby the way that they see fit. Can the Australian Government not foresee such outcomes?

I urge you to re consider this Health Legislation Amendment and overturn the proposal to outlaw homebirth in Australia. The more sensible and realistic thing to do would be to support this method of childbirth if chosen by a woman, and reinforce the framework for this practice by providing it with the safety measures that it needs to make this a viable option for Australian women and families. Protect women who choose this avenue of care and support Midwives who support women, babies and families. Australia on the whole will benefit.

Yours Sincerely

Marie Gentile-Andrit