

To Whom it May Concern,

As a Mother of three young children, I write with very grave concern in regard to this proposed legislation.

I write from a rather unique position, being that I have experienced three very different births, and in my opinion by no coincidence, three different models of care.

My first child was born through a "team" (and I use this term very loosely) midwifery group at a public hospital. For my second pregnancy my child was born through a true caseload midwifery program at a birth centre in a public hospital (more pointedly-in this case the baby was born at home unattended in precipitous circumstances). For my third pregnancy and birth I enjoyed the care of an Independent Midwife and birthed my child at home, as planned.

My first birth can only be described as an entirely traumatic and disempowering affair. This is predominantly a result of the way myself and my partner were treated by the hospital careproviders. The way we were treated on a personal level, coupled with the events of the birth have had massive implications for the wellbeing of our family on many levels.

For our second child's birth, I had the luck of the draw-literally-to develop a relationship with two midwives through my local hospital-run birthing centre. After such appalling care the first time around, the experience of this kind of care was both heartening and empowering. Unfortunately, due to funding cuts, we missed out on the in home post natal visits by just weeks-so after a check up a few days after baby's birth (for which we had to travel back to the birthing centre), we were then told to follow up with our own gp at the 6 week mark.

For our third baby, I enjoyed the outstanding care of my Independent Midwife. Our relationship developed throughout my pregnancy, culminating in the birth of our third baby safely at home. After the birth, my Midwife attended me at home several times within the first two weeks. In addition to this she phoned on the days she wasn't scheduled to come, and was available around the clock to me if I required her care and expertise. At 6 weeks, my children and I visited her home for our last check up together.

When I discuss the three models of care I have experienced, there is simply no comparison. When I think back to the experience of labouring and birthing my three children, again there is no comparison.

Clearly then, it is both a shock and outrage to me to hear that the Federal Minister for Health and her staff are legislating to effectively make Independent Midwifery practice illegal. What a positive move it has been to hear that hospital based Midwives will be given medicare provider numbers and some prescribing rights under this legislation. Where does this leave the Independent Midwives and their clients?

Furthermore, in a cunning twist, under the new federal registration system for Healthcare Providers (which aside from this issue in my opinion is a brilliant idea), the Federal Government will underwrite public indemnity insurance for Midwives, as long as they are employed to a hospital or other approved clinic. This is simply unacceptable in this day and age, where evidence dictates that homebirth is at least as safe as hospital birth in normal circumstances.

I ask that this senate review committee consider very carefully the implications that taking away this choice might have for my family, and more importantly, my Midwife. Will this draft legislation cause me to birth outside of my home after July 1 2010? Is this a fair or safe choice for me and my future children or grandchildren?

I am happy to elaborate on my experiences and concerns in more detail should it be required.

I sincerely hope the committee recognises the repercussions that will inevitably eventuate should this legislation come to be passed.

Yours sincerely,
Mandy Bugden