

Carole Doyle

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

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Dear Madam/Sir

I am a mother of 3 home-birthed children, a midwife at a regional base hospital and a midwife at an Aboriginal owned organisation. While I am ecstatic about the proposed changes to maternity care in Australia I do have major concerns about the impact of not allowing women to choose to birth at home with a Midwife. If this is intended to reduce the number of women birthing at home then I have no doubt many will now think twice. This is not necessarily an optimal outcome as homebirth with a competent birth attendant is a safe option – the evidence is clear if we view it free of hysterical bias that warns of the dangers that exist only in the absence of careful planning and adequate knowledge held by the birthing family and the birth attendant. Herein lies the problem. Remove the midwife from the homebirth and homebirth will not cease to exist. The reduced number of homebirths will be ‘unattended’ freebirths and these are the ‘disasters’ that we read about in the papers (although we never hear about the freebirths that go well). Women will not stand for being told where and how to birth, the Maternity Services Review is testimony to that. Think back to

attempts to stop abortions, women's demands were met by backyard clinics and we were certainly no better off.

I urge you to consider the implications of removing women's choice to birth at home with a Midwife by not providing support for indemnity insurance for these practitioners. Australia should consider the proven safety of Midwife attended homebirth by careful, objective review of current literature. This should be viewed in light of the rebound effect of this decision, namely the potential for making birth less safe for those who still intend to homebirth.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

Carole Doyle