

Dear Sir/Madam,

As a Women of Australia I am appalled by the new legislation the Federal Government is proposing which effectively outlaws a women's right to Homebirth. The exclusion of homebirth insurance schemes for midwives as announced by Nicola Roxon (Health Minister) in parliament unconditionally criminalizes midwives from providing homebirth care as from July 2010.

As you are aware The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has prepared draft legislation to establish a National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for all Health Professionals by July 2010. This I applaud. However this body will require evidence of medical or professional indemnity insurance to secure registration. This presents a very serious threat to women who want to access homebirth with a midwife. To date the Government has made it clear that they do not intend to provide indemnity insurance to private practice homebirth midwives. As I understand it, as a result, these midwives will be unable to register, hence making it illegal for them to attend a homebirth.

I personally have never had a home birth but as a fertile independent woman I believe that homebirth is every Woman's right. How dare the Government determine that I am not entitled to my own free will to choose how and with whom I will deliver my own child. Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is no longer acceptable to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand. These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

This legislation will bring about nothing but DANGER and DEATH. Women WILL continue to choose home birth but they will now do so without the assistance of a qualified professional. The result will be an increase in deaths for mothers and babies, this is certain. It is absolutely impossible to understand the government's position in a free word such as Australia on this, other than to say that they have bowed to political pressure from medical lobby groups.

Yes I am well aware that birthing is BIG business. The out of pocket expenses for private obstetric care attest to this. Is the AMA so important to the Labour Government's pocket that you are willing to disregard birthing Women's rights to choice?

I personally call on my Senate and in particular Senator Moore to reconsider this bill. Is it not every Australian woman's right to self determine her health care needs and whom she seeks this from? This legislation is a direct breach of basic human rights and possibly a contravention of the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). How dare the Federal Labour Government legislate against MY RIGHT to choose how and with whom I will share the most private of moments in a Women's life.

I eagerly anticipate your reply,

Yours sincerely

Angela L. Howard.