

Yvette Knights

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2009,

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

Dear Sir/Madame,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in relation to the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills.

As an individual I would like to briefly tell you my personal story and how I and the women who share my beliefs about birth will be personally affected.

In 2008 when I was pregnant with my first baby I chose to pay an Independent Midwife and have a home birth, this was a well researched conscious choice I made. When I made this decision I had the freedom of choice to do so.

When the maternity services review came out I became very excited with the approach including midwife based care but also providing a continuity of care model. I then became very worried that this was not to include home births. Not only was it not including them but it was making this model of care illegal, I would not be able to birth my next children at home with a midwife. This angers me as the review states it is about providing more choice for birthing women.

During my pregnancy I had the pleasure of having my midwife visit me at home, appointments my husband could attend. We were able to discuss the birth, and I developed trust with my midwife. She supported me during my entire labour, in a birth pool, an option not available in our local hospitals. Some benefits of birthing in water include providing pain relief, helping to prevent perineal tearing, and this is a more gentle way to be born for the baby. My birth was attended by my primary midwife and second midwife. I had no interventions. This review mentions lowering intervention rates for birthing women, and home birthing is virtually the only way to achieve this presently. So why take this choice away?

Home birth is not for everyone but this decision is well researched and statistically proven to be a safe option for low risk women. The United Kingdom has made a promise to provide homebirth as a choice for all birthing women by the end of 2009. New Zealand, Scandinavia are among many countries that provide this option for birthing women. I hope this senate enquiry will provide this choice to Australian women too.

In Summary I believe:

- The Federal Government must provide indemnity insurance for Independent Midwives attending homebirths
- Include in the legislation that a midwife may seek an exemption from having Indemnity Insurance when it is unavailable
- For women to still have the choice of having a midwife attend their homebirth.
- For women not to have to birth at home alone, to have the support and guidance of a midwife and the experience and knowledge that they provide.
- For this choice to be available to future generations of Australian women.
- For Australian women to have a right to make an informed decision about where and with whom she births her baby

I implore you to make a stand with us and support the freedom of choice for birthing women. Just because I am part of a minority group does not make my choices less important.

Sincerely,

Yvette Knights