



Natural Birth

Education & Research Centre

The Secretariat
Maternity Services Review
MDP 94,
GPO Box 9848
CANBERRA ACT 2601

RESPONSE TO Senate Inquires into legislation

Improving Maternity Services in Australia – developed by the Department of Health and Ageing.

To Whom It May Concern,

Prior to 31st October 2008, our organisation responded to the abovementioned discussion paper and review. Thank you for inviting us to respond to the current parliamentary bill.

We have reviewed the legislation and are impressed that the Australian Government recognises the need for the changes that will hopefully lead payment of the care received by a Midwife via Medicare Rebates for low-risk families.

Whilst our organisation agrees with the focus set out in the principles of the Framework for Implementation for Primary Maternity Services across Australia and the National consensus Framework for Rural Maternity Services in 2007 concerns have been raised that the Legislative changes may not lead to the needs of women who are at present choosing to birth out-side of a hospital without appropriate midwifery care.

Women are choosing to birth at home without a midwife because private midwifery costs are not reimbursable. Our perceptions are that the Legislative Bill incorporates and provides a safe definition of eligible midwifery care. We are however, unsure if in consequence the Medicare Rebates will cover the critical need i.e. reimbursement for the actual birth. We trust in its final assessment of the Legislative Bill the government will recognize and ensure the following is addressed.

1. the incidence of families birthing at home without adequate, safe birthing care
2. the provision of safe reimbursable Midwifery Continuity of Care Services for families choosing to birth out-side of hospital and for
3. the promotion of an effective alternative collaborative model between Midwifery Care and Specialist Care – that includes birthing out-side of a hospital.

Our suggested contribution to final assessment of the Legislative Bill is based on:

- the specific life-style needs of the broader community.
- the need to support families who are birthing out-side of hospital without registered caregivers
- the desire to uphold ALL health department recommendations & regulations.
- an understanding of our understaffed hospital system that cannot not offer optimal support & care.
- the lack of safe 'out-of-hospital' **reimbursed birthing options** for parents in our community

Whilst our organisation supports those who have tirelessly contributed to the development of the Legislative Bill and the important part that it will play we have an overwhelming concern that the changes may not lead to the primary major concern:

- the provision of financially equitable safe care for women who choose to birth outside of hospital.

It is our understanding that subsequent to the 'eligibility of a midwife' being enacted the National Accreditation Midwifery standards will lead to government support for the provision of Professional Indemnity to Midwives. Without doubt we trust this will lead the inclusion of current world view where appropriate care by a Midwife in a venue suitable to the women's needs is offered thru financial reimbursement. We implore you to ensure all changes reflect both the safety and financial equity for healthy birthing women who choose to birth 'out-side' of hospital.

Thank you.

Margaret Spain
Secretary
On behalf of the executive
The Natural Birth Education & Research Centre Inc
8th July 2008