

Wednesday 9th December 2009

Ballarat Maternity Coalition Branch
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TO: The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au
fax (02) 6277 5829.

Dear Senate Community Affairs Committee,

Re: Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Midwife Professional Indemnity (Commonwealth Contribution) Scheme Bill 2009.

These amendments remove choice for women and will make it impossible for a woman to choose private practice midwife led care in Australia. They put doctors rather than women at the centre of maternity care and put the ability of midwives to practice in the hands of doctors rather than an independent registration and licensing body.

The AMA and Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists do not support homebirth and it is unrealistic to expect that members of these organisations will readily enter into collaborative arrangements with midwives providing women with this choice. Women in rural areas will be more greatly impacted which is unacceptable.

What the Ballarat branch of Maternity Coalition members are asking you to do is to remove any requirement for collaborative arrangements as a prerequisite for access to insurance, eligibility, or registration for private midwifery practice. To also explicitly include and support collaborative relationships between midwives and hospitals, not limited to individual doctors. We cannot have a situation where one group veto or control another group as suggested in these amendments.

We support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and insurance protection, and where different health professionals (midwives and GP/obstetricians) are treated with the same respect. In these proposed amendments, midwives are not being treated with the same respect as obstetricians.

In Ballarat all of our three privately practising obstetricians have indicated that they do not support homebirth and therefore would not work in a collaborative arrangement with a private midwife. This will therefore mean that no women in the Ballarat area will be able to birth at home with the safety and support of a private midwife, further reducing the options of care for women.

Let's start putting the needs of ALL women and babies first in the National Registration and Accreditation process. A midwife must not be at the mercy of obstetricians in order to register, especially considering as an organisation they do not support homebirth.

Yours sincerely

Faye Kricak
President
Ballarat Branch Maternity Coalition