

Siobhan Motherway

30<sup>th</sup> April, 2009

The Secretary  
Senate Community Affairs Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr/Madam Secretary,

I wish to present a personal submission to the committee, concerning the proposed National Accreditation and Registration Scheme for doctors and allied health professionals.

As has been raised in the national media, the potential collateral impact of this scheme is to render homebirth untenable, as currently midwives who support women in homebirth are unable to get professional indemnity insurance. As a result, I must strongly protest the scheme as currently proposed, and ask that modifications are made to ensure midwives have the professional support and protection they deserve, and that women have all appropriate choices available to them.

I gave birth at home to my first child under the care of two professional and highly skilled midwives, who cared for me through my pregnancy, birth and postnatal time. The service was everything I could have asked for in terms of giving me privacy, dignity and a relationship of trust with the midwives caring for my baby and me. I also was not pressured into treatments or interventions I did not require, and had a far lower risk of surgery (Caesarean section) as a result. The most recent and largest cohort (530,000 women) study out of the Netherlands indicates that low-risk, planned homebirth has equally safe outcomes for mothers and babies as low-risk hospital birth, with additional positive outcomes such as maternal satisfaction, higher breastfeeding rates and quicker recovery.

Making attended homebirth illegal in practice will effectively leave me, and women like me, with two choices. Engage in illegal activity by hiring a midwife who is willing to attend a homebirth unofficially, or give birth without an attendant (known as "freebirthing"). I would not take a healthy pregnancy and low-risk birth into a hospital with the current disturbingly high rates of Caesarean section, and I do not wish to be marginalized and disenfranchised in this manner.

This is not just a problem for a vocal minority – this is every single woman being

denied a legitimate and appropriate option regarding her body and health. The proposed Scheme must include some arrangement to allow midwives to practice as the trained, competent and essential professionals they are, and to support women birthing at home.

I thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Siobhan Motherway