

Anna Cisera

To the Senate

I am writing in regard to the Senate inquiry into National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Doctors and Other Health Workers. I would like this to be tabled as a submission to the committee.

The item I would like to comment on is the issue of independent midwives and their inability to access indemnity insurance (a situation which has been unresolved since 2001). Many independent midwives chose to no longer practice at that time. The midwives that have continued to practice are now faced with the prospect of losing their profession this means that Australia is at a junction point where women's birthing options may be further eroded. With the recommendations into national registration requiring all professionals to have indemnity insurance it will effectively make all of our independent midwives redundant. Most independent midwives choose to practice independently because they have a deep philosophical belief that birthing is a normal, natural life event and that it doesn't need medical "managing". They recognise that women and families have the best outcomes and least medical intervention when they have the same person following them throughout their pregnancy, during birth and in the post partum period (this is recognised by the World Health Organization). By removing this as an option it will leave some women and families to see birthing unassisted by a professional as their only remaining option.

Although I have completed my family I cannot leave this as someone else's business. I want my children and all women to have access to an independent midwife, if that is their choice. I would love Australia to be a place where choice is supported, not thwarted. Independent midwives need to remain as a viable option for those who want it. Once this option has gone it will be gone forever.

I am a proud grandmother of seven beautiful grandchildren. I was able to be present at the births of those children, in the environment that my daughters (3) felt most comfortable in. These choices included two hospital births and five home births. I met the midwives very early in my daughters' pregnancies and they gave me confidence and I trusted their expertise. I knew that if the births didn't follow a natural progression and medical intervention was needed the midwife would not have hesitated to transfer to a local hospital. The care that was given went above and

beyond any expectations I had. The midwives were on call day and night. And would often spend 2 hours or more during a pregnancy visit. They were there as the girls laboured and birthed. It was also a great cost saving for the government as my daughters had to meet all costs as home birthing is not covered by medi-care.

It is a basic right that women be able to choose the professional they want in charge of their care during pregnancy and birth, and that they are also to choose the place most safe, secure and comfortable to them at this most crucial of times, The government must do something to fix this problem by providing professional indemnity insurance to private midwives immediately so that women in Australia will not be left without the care of professionals to attend them to birth in their own homes.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Anna Cisera