

Submission to Senate Inquiry into National Registration

While I support the general idea of National Registration for health professionals, I am greatly concerned about, and wish to draw the Senate's attention to, the impact this will have on *Independent Midwives, and thus on a woman's right to choose where and with whose support she gives birth.*

I understand that registration will require professional indemnity insurance. This is currently not available to Independent Midwives, for commercial reasons – there are relatively few Independent Midwives so it is not cost-effective for an insurance company to offer this. This is not due to risk factors, as a homebirth supported by experienced professional midwives has proven to be at least as safe as a birth in hospital.

The recent Maternity Services Review advocates for greater provision of midwife-based continuity of care. I look forward to the implementation of this recommendation so that all women, babies & families are able to receive the highest level of care that comes from having a well-established, trusting relationship with the people who will support them at the birth. However, the continuous care model (also known as Caseload or Team Midwifery) is not yet widely available in many areas. So often the only way a woman can ensure she receives continuity of care is with an Independent Midwife.

Women choose to birth at home for many reasons. A major one is that they see pregnancy and birth as a normal, healthy part of life, not as a condition or illness that requires treatment in a hospital. If more women were supported to birth at home just think of the pressure that would be relieved on our struggling public hospital system.

I am mother to 4 children. I have birthed in a public birth centre, a public hospital and at home with independent midwives – all wonderful experiences. My family chose homebirth as a safe option that suited us best as a family with young children. My midwives provided antenatal care in my home, wonderful as I didn't have to drive, park, wait and entertain 3 children in a hospital or clinic. My children knew, trusted and loved our midwives so they were comfortable and happy during the birth, which allowed me to get on with the work of labour. Most importantly we were all together during this most momentous of occasions, our new baby was born safely into his family's loving arms, the children saw birth as a normal part of life and all 6 of us were snuggled in bed together a few hours later.

Please do not in advertently take away this most fundamental right of choice.

I urge you to ensure that one of the options is implemented immediately:

1. Provide Professional Indemnity Insurance to Independent Midwives (this may need to be government subsidised as it is for other professions such as obstetricians)
2. Waive the requirement for PII for professions to whom it is not available
3. Consider a national government compensation scheme to replace PPI.

Submitted by Ms R L Clark