

Dear Sir/Madam

Thankyou for accepting this submission to the Inquiry.

I am writing to you as a midwife. I have been a midwife since 1998, and working independently since this time. I am currently full time in private practice antipiating working another 20 years until my entirement.

It is with great sadness that I prepare this submission, as I recognise the likelihood that the new laws governing registration and accreditation of my profession will also signal the termination of my right to practice, due to the fact that professional indemnity insurance is not available for midwives. In our submissions to the federal government's recent Maternity Services Review I and many other midwives, consumers, and maternity organisations informed the Review of the urgent need midwives have for indemnity that will cover our private practices. The Report (Section 6.2) acknowledged the Government's support for the medical profession, including the Premium Support Scheme, "which provided financial relief to specialists such as obstetricians so that their premium costs relative to other specialties became more affordable", but failed to recommend that any similar support be available for midwives, or to offer any other lifeline to midwives.

While I am not opposed to national registration, am deeply concerned about the Government's inequitable support for the medical profession over the midwifery profession in this instance.

As a consequence of the propsed changes to registration I will be forced to cease working in private practice, which will mean closing my established business and terminating my families income.

Furthermore the choice to birth their babies at home with an independent midwife would be taken from women in Australia. This restriction is regressive when compared to other developed nations. Australian consumers have the right to choose the primary maternity care provider, either a midwife or a doctor, with consideration of the ability to each one to provide the service required by the individual woman and her child.

I therefore request that, in the implementation of the Government's national registration and accreditation scheme for midwives, the Senate Community Affairs Committee ensure that midwives have equitable access to Government support for their purchasing of indemnity insurance, and for the provision of services.

Wendy Buckland