

Attention Senate Inquiry,

Midwives supporting homebirths need to be supported by legislation & the health system which they have a relationship with. The complaints evaluation & management process requires an overhaul to ensure homebirth midwives experience due process. They do not get a fair trial as things stand.

The process for addressing complaints against midwives, homebirth midwives in particular goes against the rule of law. It enables malicious complaints to have very powerful destructive impact on the life & mental wellbeing of both the nurse midwife & her clients (the current ones involved in the complaint & the ones awaiting support in their birth process, in the up & coming months ... whilst the complaint is dealt with). Severe restrictions on the midwives ability to service clients like "must practice only under supervision in a hospital setting" being such an example. Other health care professionals such as obstetricians do not have such gross limitations placed on their ability to practice by a complaint.

The nature of birth is highly emotionally charged. Views on what occurred in the moment, in retrospect & after some debriefing can change markedly once all the facts are in. Perceptions of what went right or wrong can change based on learning a bit more of what informed particular decisions in that moment. Currently a complaint against a homebirth midwife leaves her very exposed to highly emotionally charged complaints (which may be resolved during investigation of the matter) impacting her ability to practice, whilst the complaint is being investigated/decided upon, weeks or months.

This isn't fair or just.

Homebirth midwives should be offered due process & a fair evaluation/trial/hearing of the complaints made against them, in a systematic equitable fashion.

The current process for pursuing & processing complaints creates fear amongst midwives & their clients. Which doesn't help the birthing mothers psychological health & wellbeing if she's in fear of losing her midwife in the event she is scapegoated.

It opens the door for unfounded malicious complaints to cripple a nurses professional standing & carefully built private practice based on trust & word of mouth referral. Dangerous in an era where big business & politics can be powerful motivators for creating accusations which are later to be found to be untrue.

The current system for evaluating complaints & processing them when they are made against homebirth midwives fails in it's attempts to protect the wider public... specifically the clients who are awaiting their births with the support of professional awaiting evaluation, by putting the other women/mothers on the midwives upcoming births in a very stressful predicament, when their midwife is marked & awaiting review.

International research shows many & varied benefits which flow on from a woman labouring in their home or a safe homely environment. That is a non-medicalised, non-surgicalised environment. Legislation or process which places restrictions on a homebirth midwives ability to practice ONLY in a hospital setting is crippling. Completely at odds with what the birthing mother & homebirth midwife are trying to achieve. Natural non-adrenalised birth in a safe, psychologically safe, emotionally warm secure place where the birthing women feels she can be totally at ease & relax into her birth process.

I would like to see the ability to place this restriction removed as an option available to the registration board whilst investigation into complaint is pending.

I would like to see a process which is more fair & equitable. Where the homebirth midwife is innocent until proven guilty(exception being extreme cases in which the law would intervene via the police it any rate) .

I would like to see the abolision of the limitation to working in hospitals as an interim restriction whilst a review outcome of the complaint is pending.

I would like to see a penalty system put in place for maliciously motivated accusations, or at the very least that the accussor/complaintant be public information & that they are required to be present in any pursuit of the matter by AHPRAH. So that if you make a complaint, there is a process for pursuing that to the end. The complatant is involved in that process to it's natural conclusion. To reduce the incidence of unfounded/maliciously motivated complaints.

I would like the Australian Government to look to New Zealand & recent history in other countries like Sweden & Russia & England, when looking for building a support system to help women, Australian women birth naturally. Homebirth offers a gentler birth process with reduced costs to the wider community, reserving hospital beds for true medical & surgical emergencies for which they are intended.

Yours Sincerely Milica Fraser Registered Nurse