

Dear Senators:

My name is Andrea Quanchi and I am a midwife. I like to not think of myself as a hospital midwife or a homebirth midwife but simply as a very experienced midwife. I have been a midwife for over 25 years. I am currently registered in both Victoria and NSW as I live in Echuca on the border.

I currently undertake midwifery in two settings and would like to tell you about my life as a midwife in relation to the recent Improving Maternity Services in Australia report.

Firstly I am employed part time as a clinical midwifery specialist at Echuca Regional Health (ERH). I have worked here since 1989. ERH provides the only maternity service for a large geographical area with the nearest bigger centres being 100kms away.

ERH offers no continuity of care for women from pregnancy to labour and birth either from doctors or midwives. While there is no reason this can't happen there is no vested interest by the current GP /Obstetrician in changing a system that is affording them financial gain and professional dominance. Women who want to choose continuity of care with a known midwife must go outside the public system. They can choose continuity of medical care by either being a private patient of their chosen GP and having whichever midwife happens to be on when they are admitted.

So to my second role which is as a midwife in private practice in my own business Echuca Moama Midwifery & Parenting Service where I offer women continuity of care throughout their pregnancy and into their role as new parents. The difference is that during labour and birth the women who have chosen me as their midwife have a known midwife with them throughout their labour and birth and into the post natal period. Most continue with me as their maternal and child health nurse for many years afterwards. They come back again for their next birth and it is a very satisfying way to work for me.

Where women choose to birth is up to them. I will be with them where ever they choose to birth. Some choose hospital and some chose home. Its their choice and I really don't have a vested interest one way or the other.

Under the proposed National Registration scheme I would be unable to register as a midwife unless I can demonstrate that I have professional indemnity insurance that I cannot procure. Its not that I choose not to have it it is not available. This would in fact have the effect of removing the choice for women to choose having a known midwife where this is currently unavailable as a publicly funded option. This is the vast majority of Australian women especially those who live outside of major capitol cities.

Protection of the rights of women who do not have access to a publicly available option of homebirth is essential by allowing them the choice of birth at home with a registered midwife. For this to happen midwives need to be

able to register and to do this they need access to affordable professional indemnity insurance.

This is just one midwife's story. I am not alone, all over Australia there are midwives working together with women to give women choices currently not afforded them by the system. Whether or not they should be is a whole other discussion but why take a way the only choice they currently have. This would be the direct effect of the current recommendations as they stand whether this is intended or not.

Please protect my right to continue to work with women and their families as I know I do make a difference in their lives.

Thanking you for your time,

Andrea Quanchi