

# **Submission to the “Inquiry into National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Doctors and Other Health Workers”**

7 July 2009

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs  
By email: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently awaiting the birth of my second child, due in less than two weeks.

My first child was born at the Family Birth Centre at the Angliss Hospital in Upper Ferntree Gully, and although the quality of care was good, it highlighted the challenges of a hospital birth for me personally. Ultimately I am very much a homebody, and being out my familiar, safe, home environment was a significant contributor to some of the less than ideal outcomes, for me, of my birthing experience.

With my second child, I have chosen to plan for a homebirth, and I am very excited to be able to prepare my home for the event. I am looking forward to being surrounded by familiar people, things and sights, and to feeling safe and comfortable in my own space. I have chosen to be attended by independent midwives, and the relationship we have built with them personally over the last 9 months gives me the confidence that that they are experienced and qualified to assist me as I birth my child, more so than any insurance ever could.

This is not a choice I have made lightly, without consideration of the alternatives, risks and requirements. Having a homebirth will cost our family in excess of \$5000, but this is a price I am willing to pay for the benefits to me and to my family of this option. I understand the risks, and I am willing to transfer into hospital care should any unforeseen circumstances require it during the course of my pregnancy or labour. Having a homebirth is not about taking unnecessary risks, but about creating the kind of birthing experience I want.

I applaud the government’s move to ensure that all health care providers are appropriately qualified to perform in their roles. However, I am concerned that the requirement for professional indemnity insurance in order to qualify for registration will prevent independent midwives from practising, given that there is currently no insurance provider willing to offer a product to this section of the health care provider community.

In the absence of such a product, it would effectively make it illegal for my midwives to attend my homebirth. I would be left with two choices that I might be even willing to consider: attend a birth centre at a hospital, as I have done previously with less than optimal results for me, or attempt a freebirth, which I consider a dangerous and irresponsible course of action. Obviously, neither of these options is desirable for me personally.

The removal of homebirth as a choice, which would be the effective outcome of the registration requirements as they currently stand, would be devastating to me and to other women in the same position. I believe that birth is a natural process, not an illness, and that where a pregnancy is low-risk, homebirth in the care of qualified and experienced independent midwives is a very desirable option for all parties. The demand on the hospital system is decreased, and the satisfaction with outcomes for women who choose this option is increased.

I ask you to ensure that, as part of the “National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Doctors and Other Health Workers”, you provide a way for independent midwives to legally continue to practice as they are currently, and to attend homebirths.

Thank you.

Nikki Stokes