

Exposure Draft – Health Practitioner Regulation National Law 2009

Asiya Davidson-Allouche
To NRAIP 17/7/09 09:45AM

Re Independent (Homebirth) Midwifery

I wish to draw attention to section 101 (ii) in which a registered health practitioner must not practise the health profession unless professional indemnity insurance arrangements are in force. Also to section 148 in which a person must not direct or incite a registered health practitioner that amounts to unprofessional conduct or professional misconduct, incurring penalties.

Registered homebirth midwives are not covered by indemnity insurance due to the small numbers practicing and therefore it is not viable to indemnify them. The introduction of this legislation means that homebirth midwives will no longer be legally allowed to practice midwifery without insurance.

Therefore a registered homebirth midwife will not be able to attend a women's birth in her home, as they have in the past. This not only affects me but every women in Australia who chooses to birth at home with a registered midwife. This will also affect families who wish to choose the continuity of care and support that a midwife provides and therefore affects unborn children.

The right for a woman to choose where and how she gives birth is of fundamental importance. When her agency is taken away and she is forced to birth in hospital against her wishes, it is of no benefit to anyone, least of all her baby. I am a mother of four children, all born in hospital. My last child was born only two weeks ago and the birthing experience in hospital was less than satisfactory. Should I have any more children, I wish to have a homebirth as long as my pregnancy is low risk. I am aghast that this new legislation will effectively take away my choice to do so. It shows that Australia is still parochial in attitudes. If we looked to European countries such as the Netherlands, to see what occurs when homebirth for low risk pregnancies is the norm, we would see that it is actually quite safe and has many benefits for mother and child.

This legislation will vastly limit a women's choice to birth where and with whom she chooses. This will force women into hospital systems that over-medicalise birth or to birth at home without the support of a qualified professional midwife of their choice.

I am opposed to the introduction of this legislation and I suggest that an amendment be made to include an exemption for Independent Midwives to require indemnity insurance.

Yours Sincerely

Asiya Davidson-Allouche