

## **Exposure Draft – Health Practitioner Regulation National Law 2009**

Anita Siegersma  
To NRAIP 17/7/09 10:00AM

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.

Current available research clearly reveals the long term benefits of a gentle and natural birth, and its potential to enhance mother-baby bonding relationships, and the ongoing involvement of the father. Its benefits in terms of cost savings, encompass not only the obvious economic financial benefits, but subtle and crucial benefits to the health and wellbeing of families particularly in laying the foundations for strong healthy emotional development for the baby and the family constellation involved. Let us re-consider where we have taken the miraculous event of birthing, and return it to the place of the home, 'home' being defined by where ever a woman chooses to feel the most comfortable, and give thanks for the place of intervention, only if and when required, not as a regular methodology in birth.

If this legislation was to go ahead, it will seriously jeopardise the preservation and sustainability of centuries of wisdom, skill and knowing passed down from woman to woman for woman to be 'with' woman in her time of birthing. It is a resource base too precious to lose, and requires our demonstrated ongoing support in the form of mainstream 'inclusion' in our health system, to truly reflect the choices of our families.

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  
Anita Siegersma