



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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## MIDWIFERY

**Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN** (Pumicestone—ALP) (6.55 p.m.): Last week an item on *A Current Affair* highlighted the recent decision of Guild Insurance to cease renewing professional indemnity insurance to midwives. A written statement from the company confirmed that it believed that midwifery was a highly litigious area and that it did not receive enough premiums to cover even one large damages claim. This is hard to refute in an industry where it is difficult to find out just who is being sued or to discover what the rate of litigation is. As Guild's policies for each of the 80 midwives across Australia run out, midwives are being told that their insurance will not be renewed so that their services will no longer be insured.

Where will this leave midwifery in this country? I suggest that this latest decision will have a very negative impact and many midwives will simply opt out of the business—a business which has already reached crisis point because of the shortage of independent midwives. One midwife said during the television interview that in her 30 years of faultless expertise and care she had not had to make even a notification, let alone a claim. She is retiring, not because she wants to but because she is no longer insured and she does not want to take the risk—and why should she?

Midwifery is not everyone's choice—it was not mine—but for some women it is the only way they wish to have their babies, and it is a choice they should have. To deny women choice about where they have their babies and which care provider should be in attendance is an erosion of basic human rights. Of the two women who were interviewed for the program, one said that she would go so far as to not have another child if she could not have the services of a midwife. The World Health Organisation states—

Midwifery appears to be the most appropriate and cost effective type of health care provider to be assigned to the care of normal pregnancy and normal birth ...

Federally it is time to look at the capping of medical malpractice payouts, which should reduce insurance premiums, and look at recognising midwifery as the independent profession that it is. There must be a concerted push to ensure it remains a viable, accessible and safe alternative service to those women who demand it.

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