

Gillard Government signs away Women's Rights

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FOLLOWING the Government's backwards changes to national midwifery regulations, thousands of Australian women are voicing their concern.

Their urgent voices have just over a month to address draconian amendments to proposed new laws.

Collectively, thousands of voices have culminated in four women running as independent candidates in critical marginal seats in an attempt to talk to Australia's law makers.

These four independents will stand in the marginal federal seats of: **Robertson** on the NSW Central Coast, **Corangamite** in southern Victoria, **Macquarie** in the Blue Mountains, NSW, and **Dickson** in northern Brisbane, Queensland.

"We had no choice but to stand for Parliament. We are standing as Independents to represent the voices of thousands of women around Australia. These women are angry about the effect the Gillard Government's new maternity laws will have on their birth choices," Robertson candidate Michelle Meares said.

"The day before the Federal election was announced there were changes made to existing midwifery legislation. Defined as "collaborative arrangements", the changes, in essence, give doctors a veto over women's choices.

"Basically, the changes detail that any midwife whose patient wants to claim through Medicare must get permission from a Doctor for the decisions made during the pregnancy and birth."

"These new laws give Doctor's veto rights over women's birth choices."

"It is unlikely that Doctors will agree to collaborate with private midwives, with some receiving advice from their insurer that collaborating would void their insurance."

"This is unworkable. It will not allow women to be able to afford midwives for home births."

After the election, once the caretaker Government steps aside and the Senate resumes sitting, there will a two-week window in which the changes can be disallowed.

"When the senate resumes we have two weeks in which to change the "collaborative arrangement" the Government wants to impose.

A similar situation developed in the US state of New York. But the law was found to be unworkable. It was repealed when the Midwifery Modernization Act was passed in July.

Each of the four candidates disagrees with the recently passed legislation forcing midwives into "collaborative arrangements" with doctors. Specifically they are pushing for:

- A guarantee that the medical veto over women's choices will be removed
- A commitment that women's rights to informed consent (including the right of refusal) will be expressly recognised in all codes, guidelines and frameworks relating to midwifery practice
- Ensure that privately practising midwives have visiting rights in hospitals across the country
- A commitment to funding and insurance for homebirth to ensure equity for all Australian women

Men do not give birth and should not be allowed to push women into this position.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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