

Ms Adams

I am writing to inform you of the outrage I feel regarding the new legislation governing maternity services – the legislation that attempts to outlaw homebirths.

What we demand from our government is the right to have an independent midwife with us through our pregnancies and birth. What I want is an exemption to the indemnity insurance requirement for independent midwives.

What I want from you is pressure on the rest of the government to make this happen. As a fellow woman and advocate of women's rights, and a former midwife, surely you must be enraged at the prospect of a woman not owning her own birth. I believe that you can help us keep one of our basic human rights – the right to create and birth a child naturally, as we see fit. This is the point of an animal's existence, procreation – and we deserve and WILL TAKE the right to do it naturally.

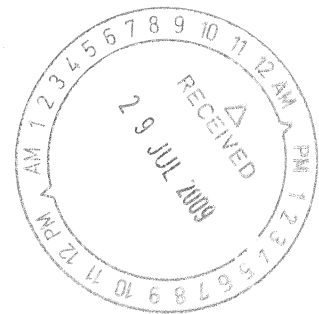
I am including here my letter to Nicola Roxon – please read it fully and consider what you can do to help us.

We WILL have our natural births, we WILL have our midwives. We will fight, and win, because we govern our own bodies. Wouldn't you like to be known as someone who helped women regain the right to birth?

Please reply to this letter in writing within 7 working days, or I will assume that it has not reached you, and mail it again.

Anderson 23/7/09

Outraged but Hopeful
Paige Anderson



Ms Roxon

And yes, that means that I wish for Nicola Roxon to read this letter, not one of her staff. I do not wish it to be paraphrased to her, for every word I have written here is laced with tears, so much grief do I feel at the potential loss of the natural mother.

I am a woman, and a mother. I have evolved for millenia with fertility – and the inherent ability to conceive, grow a baby, and birth that baby. Women have been capable of this basic, and natural act for as long as we have been women, as long as we have been mammals. One of women's primary functions, in nature, is to birth her children.

Please explain to me why, then, our society seems desperate to force birth into the place of a disease, pregnancy into a disability, and women, with our powerful fertility, to nothing more than mindless, unqualified incubators for obstetricians to operate on. To 'save' the baby from our incompetent uteruses.

Before I begin the specifics of my complaint about your proposed legislation, I wish to offer you some insight into who is writing this letter. Perhaps, although I consider it unlikely, you will see that I am a human being, deserving of respect and the right to my own body.

I am a mother, who has given birth in a hospital. I was at first sat in a storage closet with a comfortable chair pushed into it – apparently the waiting rooms, and beds were full. I would have felt a lot better in my bed at home. Hours later I was left to scream in agony in a room surrounded by new mothers and babies, and told to “shut up and not wake the babies”. I was alone, as I went through transition, yelling out to the nursing staff that I was, in fact, doing as such. Because my contractions were considered erratic, they assured me I was wrong. I could not be feeling what I was. At some point I fell to the floor shrieking in agony – it was then they decided to take me to the birthing rooms, to (paraphrasing) “give me some medication to shut me up”.

They then discovered that I was, indeed, having a baby. I could have told them that. I was forced to lie in the prone position, which is documented to be the worst position for birth, with heavy motoring equipment all over me - my waters had broken before my contractions had begun, so they needed to 'take care of me'. I was, several time, told to be quiet, that there was no reason to scream, by my hospital-issued midwife. At one point she deemed that my legs were not wide enough apart – and forcibly pushed them flat on the bed. This has resulted in damage to my hips which still plagues me three years on, with frequent dislocations and slips in the joint. My baby was born healthily, allegedly due to the assistance of the medical staff. All they did was check the beeps, and verbally and physically abuse me. I birthed my baby. I knew he was alright, and needed no beeps to tell me so.

Because of this experience, the isolation I felt, the fear, the verbal, physical, and emotional abuse (not to mention the 'dead baby' card which was played many times throughout my pregnancy for no reason) I suffered severe post-natal depression. I have still not recovered from this.

I hope that you now see me as a person, who has suffered greatly at the hands of medicalised birth. I am not alone.

The new legislation governing maternity is of great concern to me. I deserve the right to use my body in the way it was designed – to conceive, grow, and birth my children under my own power. I do not need assistance to conceive a child, and I do not need assistance to grow that child. I do not need assistance to breastfeed my child. So, why, do I need assistance to birth them?

While I choose to birth my future children in my own home, without any medical assistance, many women do not feel confident in their abilities to do this. This is primarily due to the attitude, in our society, that birth is an emergency. How can this be when approximately 357 hundred thousand births occur per day? How can the primary function of life, procreation, be an emergency? Many women, though forced into fear about their abilities to birth, desire to birth naturally in their

homes, but wish to be attended by a person, trained to assist if needed, who respects their power to birth – a midwife. These women deserve the right to a caring professional – NOT an obstetrician, who will turn birth into a medical emergency with every intervention they (the obstetrician, NOT the mother) desire, and not a hospital-employed midwife, who rarely respect women's ability to birth any better than obstetricians do.

These particular articles of the legislation are where my complaint to you lie:

Subdivision 6 General

148 Directing or inciting unprofessional conduct or professional misconduct

(1) A person must not direct or incite a registered health practitioner to do anything, in the course of the practitioner's practice of the health profession, that amounts to unprofessional conduct or professional misconduct.

Maximum penalty:

- (a) in the case of an individual—\$30,000, or*
- (b) in the case of a body corporate—\$60,000.*

If I am reading correctly, this legislation will cause women who attempt to hire an Independent Midwife to attend their homebirth to be fined.

Can asking a care provider who you trust, who trusts your own body to do what it was intended to assist you in your natural act of birth be illegal?

But, of course, you may say that women can hire any approved staff. Another problem in this legislation is this:

101 Conditions of registration

(1) If a National Board decides to register a person in the health profession for which the Board is established, the registration is subject to the following conditions:

(a) for a registered health practitioner other than a health practitioner who holds non-practising registration:

(i) that the registered health practitioner must complete the continuing professional development program required by the National Board, and

(ii) that the registered health practitioner must not practise the health profession unless professional indemnity insurance arrangements are in force in relation to the practitioner's practice of the profession,

Independent Midwives are currently unable to access indemnity insurance, due to the stranglehold the medical/obstetrical community has on our society. The monopoly, if you will. This means that they are unable to be registered by the National Board – and are unable to be hired by women seeking homebirths.

These women will no longer have the right to access care which they deem fit for themselves, their bodies, and their new children.

This is appalling.

You are a mother. How would you feel if the in mode you wished to birth your children was suddenly denied to you, on the basis of it being unwise, when you knew it was perfectly safe? When evidence points to it being as safe, if not more so, than the alternatives left to you? I assume you would not have been happy about this – you would have complained, and possibly done what you knew was right anyway, which may have caused you legal hardships.

This is what you are doing to many women around our country (which, by the way, is supposed to be a beacon of human rights. Don't we consider ourselves, in the Western World, to be more humane than many other countries?).

And you are naïve if you think it ends there. This is a breach of women's rights – how long before the rights we have already fought for are taken from us? The rights you so freely enjoy?

How long before our rights to abortions and contraception are taken? Our rights to raise our children solely – to breastfeed our children?

How about our rights to refuse sex from our husbands?

Our rights to divorce?

Our right to work in the same jobs as men, with equal pay?

Our rights to the same education?

Our rights to government representation?

Our rights to own land?

Our rights to vote?

You are starting down the slippery slope toward women returning to the property of their husbands, fathers, or brothers.

You will remove all we have fought for if this legislation passes.

You will see yourself, in old age, what you have wrought, and weep, as your children live in a world where a woman's body is not her own to do with what she is born to do.

You are stealing from women the right to give life to their children the way nature intended – not torn from a gaping wound, or sucked out of a mutilated vagina – but in their own time, in a woman's home, perhaps surrounded by loved ones, and perhaps also another woman, trained medically, but happy to leave the mother to do her job as she sees fit.

Consider what you are doing to us, your children, and yourself.

What we demand is the legal right to birth with a midwife, at home or wherever we choose. There are several ways to do this – and I'm sure politicians can come up with many more I haven't imagined. What I want is an exemption from indemnity insurance for independent midwives – this would enable them to practice as they have before. If they were somehow allowed indemnity insurance, all I can foresee are the same restrictions as we have in hospital – natural birth after caesarian sections, post date births, natural births for any age, natural birth of twins and breech babies, and many many other factors which the hospital deems critical. These factors are often the reason a woman seeks to homebirth – because she cannot obtain a natural birth in a hospital with them. But studies and experience show that these factors are completely irrelevant. One can birth just the same with any of these factors, and many more, as they can with a 'textbook' pregnancy. What I want is an exemption to the indemnity insurance requirement for homebirth midwives. Down the track, it would be wise to create a form of indemnity insurance which allows all such 'aberrant' although completely safe births – but this cannot be done before July 2010. For now, you must create the exemption.

Outraged but not Alone



Paige Anderson