

Dear Secretary,

I am sure you will receive many letters on this subject. I had four children at home (starting at 30 yo, an 'elderly primigravida' is the term the medical profession like) and I was born at home to my 40 yo mother. In the mainstream system, as I am married to a doctor, I would have been pressured to accept analgesia and a doctor to deliver my babies. I am a healthy low risk woman, so decided I wanted to have a choice in how I birth.

I chose to have two independent midwives and a GP (other than my husband as he was the dad!) attend my home births and I chose to use water in labour and if I birthed there that was fine. All my children were born into water and I delivered the last three myself, surrounded by my carers in a safe planned environment. All my children think it is sad that people choose to have babies in hospital, as they love the feeling of seeing their siblings born and not having to separate as a family and use someone else's 'room'. They understand some people really need hospitals and are safer birthing there. I'm not an unrealistic idealist. Medical help is brilliant when one needs it but is often thrust upon people who don't. Intervention rates in Australia have skyrocketed and womens' bodies have not undergone that much evolution! Supportive midwifery is the ideal care of everyone, like in New Zealand and Netherlands.

I am very concerned that my children and people having babies from next year won't have options. If they choose home birth as an option, their caregivers face retribution and this is inappropriate for a Western country. I am worried that Freebirth will become the norm and this will lead to more maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality. To outlaw registered midwives who cannot let women birth unattended is unbelievable in this day and age. Please make sure this does not happen.

Yours sincerely,

Kirsti Stephens,