

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you and express my grave concerns about the proposed legislation affecting homebirths.

I had my first baby at home twelve weeks ago. I came to the decision to homebirth after much research, discussion, consideration and preparation. I wanted to explain why we chose to birth at home.

1. I was not sick so I didn't understand why I had to go to hospital
2. Hospitals are not the most conducive place to birth – they are full of infections and sick people
3. At home I could control the level of interruption and interventions I received
4. We wanted a natural birth and not to be influenced or tempted by drugs (as a result our baby was very calm, alert, and strong and my recovery was fantastic)
5. We wanted to bond with our baby immediately with no strangers present (the result has been a very content baby who is besotted with her parents and has fed well from the outset)
6. We knew that birth was an intimate experience and therefore we wanted to choose who shared that experience with us (we were attended by a private midwife and doula that we had built a strong relationship with, as opposed to a hospital environment where you can't always control who is present)
7. We wanted to bring our baby into a conducive and loving environment – it was warm and quiet and peaceful with beautiful candles and music
8. We wanted to avoid a medicalised, cold, sterile environment with bright lights and equipment – the exact opposite environment to a womb that a baby has just come from
9. We received the best of pre-natal and post-natal care from our midwife and support person and felt safe at all times
10. We attended pre-natal classes to learn everything we could about labour and childbirth so we knew we had the ability to birth without drugs and interventions and create the experience we wanted
11. You need to be relaxed and calm to birth, and I knew I would feel most relaxed and calm in our home environment
12. We didn't have to interrupt the progress of our labour to travel to a hospital

We saw an obstetrician up until 30 weeks at which point we made our decision to birth at home and hired a private homebirth midwife. Interestingly, our midwife had delivered more babies than our obstetrician. We built a level of trust and intimacy with our midwife that didn't seem possible with our obstetrician. This was not because of any lack of skill on the behalf our obstetrician – we were just meeting in a small room with fluorescent lights and a clinical smell and always felt like we were being rushed. We also had to wait every time to meet with her and had to schedule our appointments around her schedule, not ours.

Compare this to the experience we had with our homebirth midwife. She would come to our home, at times convenient to us. She would take her time and answer every question thoughtfully, drawing on experiences from other clients and helping increase our confidence at every appointment. She would bring extra educational material and was on call for us on the phone and email any time we needed. By the time our labour approached we felt completely at ease with her and this relationship assisted in our delivery.

My husband and I do not consider ourselves to be 'on the fringe of society'. We are intelligent, well educated people who are leaders in our communities. I am the immediate past President of the Entrepreneurs Organisation, and between us my husband and I have eight businesses. One of my companies is the largest network for women in business in Australia and I therefore feel a heightened sense of responsibility to be a role model for what is possible in life.

It's been quote in the media that the proposed legislation is designed to 'give more choices to women' yet this is contradictory to making homebirthing unlawful. You are taking away choice from women.

We have seen the homebirth model work beautifully in the Netherlands, New Zealand and Canada to name a few and it can have unbelievable results for women and their babies. It can also lighten the load on our medical system by reducing the strain on resources such as nurses and beds.

Provided the pregnant woman is well prepared and looked after during her pregnancy and labour, homebirth is an excellent choice for healthy, low risk women. I appeal to you to ensure it stays an option for all women, their partners, their babies and the people who support them.

Yours sincerely,
Emma Isaacs