

Dear Senator Roxon,

I write with great concern about the lack of choice Australian women will have in the future for birthing their babies under your proposed Maternity Reforms.

Your proposed birth reforms are going to remove the option of birthing at home with a private registered midwife. It will become illegal for a midwife to attend a birth outside of a hospital unless she has personal indemnity insurance, which midwives do not have and nor do they have any prospect of getting because they are too small in number to warrant an insurance company taking them on, not because they are a high risk for claims (they are not) but because they are too few in number to create a large 'pool' of claim money.

I believe we should be working towards making home birth more accessible to women, not outlawing it. Countless studies from around the world tell us that women birthing at home have a far lower rate of intervention and complications during child birth. I believe that it should be a standard for private health funds to offer cover for home birth and that Medicare should provide rebates for those who choose home birth and prenatal care through a registered midwife. It is discriminatory that right now only the women who can afford it can choose the option of home birth.

More home births would mean utilising the wealth of skill in our midwives currently doing home practice as well as the many who are aspiring to do so. It would also take a load of pressure away from our public health system.

I saw your appearance on 'Insight' many months ago - the episode that looked at midwifery and current birthing models. I came away with a sense of hope that you supported more options for women to choose how they wish to best birth their babies. I am deeply saddened by your change in attitude.

Even though I had my own baby in hospital, I believe the ability to choose the environment in which to give birth is a deeply personal and basic right.

Please do not take this away.

Sincerely,

Joanna O'Donohue