

Dear Sir/Madam;

I write to you today as a woman, mother, advocate for normal birth, and supporter of every woman's right to choose how she gives birth and with whom.

My husband and I chose to birth at home after years of reading everything we could get our hands on on the subject. I had a wonderful, straightforward homebirth in April that has left me feeling empowered, positive and filled with a sense of joy at what I achieved.

We chose homebirth based on evidence-based research; information that paralleled our instincts that to birth at home was the best choice for us.

Why choose homebirth?

* One on one contact throughout my pregnancy in my own home. No waiting in crowded offices for a 5 minute appointment that does not address my concerns. Trusting my caregiver, as she has built a ongoing relationship with me, making me feel at ease to let myself go in her presence as I labour and birth. She is not a stranger who makes me feel tense and anxious. My body relaxes in her presence and does the job it's been designed by nature to do.

* The ability to birth my baby in my own safe, germ-free environment, avoiding a distracting car ride to a place where I know I do not need to be - a place where the sick and dying need help, not me. As a healthy woman without complications, I trust my medically trained Midwife to recommend we transfer to hospital should we need the expertise of the qualified Doctors and Nurses trained to manage complications in birth.

* Post-natal assistance every day for the first five days after the baby is born, in the comfort of my own home. I am encouraged to discuss and debrief my birth experience, helping me to process this incredible event in my life. I am being looked after physically, mentally and emotionally, decreasing the chance that I may suffer from post-natal depression in the weeks and months after birth. I can call my midwife in the middle of the night if I need support of any kind, and she responds, by visiting me, in my home, for as long as is required.

Sadly, this choice will not be available to Australian women and families for much longer. As you know, the ability of Midwives to work in private practice to attend homebirths will be made virtually impossible due to issues with professional indemnity insurance.

Now, whether you support homebirth or not, or whether you would personally choose to birth at home or not, please consider that what is in

jeopardy here is the freedom for women and their partners to choose. We will no longer have an option.

These new bills being introduced to parliament are not based on the question of the safety of homebirth outcomes; there is more than enough evidence-based research to support homebirth with a Midwife as a safe option for women. The World Health Organisation endorses homebirth as a safe choice (even for first-time mothers) for women with un-complicated pregnancies.

Women can currently choose elective caesarian funded by the government as well as the use of the drugs they would like to use for their birth. What would happen if we took these choices away?

We need to protect this special, safe, gentle option to welcome our babies into the world. Medical intervention need not be the only option.

It is imperative that these bills be reconsidered as it is a gross breach of human rights for women in Australia.

In Solidarity,

Danielle and Michael Senini