

To whom it may concern,

My little baby girl, Louisa, was born safely at home on Boxing Day last year. The experience was both exhilarating and yet intensely personal. Mine were the first hands to touch her, and her first night on this earth were spent in bed with her loving parents at home. Caring for me throughout the process was my wonderful midwife, whose calm, yet authoritative presence meant I could labour with the knowledge I was safe and looked after.

To imagine that may have been my first and only homebirth fills me with such incredible sadness, both for my future children, and for all the women out there who will not be able to experience the immense satisfaction and joy I was able to.

I have found the first few months of parenting a very hard road, but whenever I feel down or upset, I think back to the evening Louisa was born, and the feeling of elation from that day lifts my spirit. Studies have shown a negative birth experience is a factor in PND for many women, and I believe that my positive birthing experience was the single factor that kept PND at bay.

During pregnancy I was told that if I wanted a normal physiological birth, then don't go to hospital, because I would have to battle with timing procedures and protocols, different midwives and the constant threat of intervention from professionals. I decided not to even enter into that environment. Who wants to be arguing with a stranger when you're in labour? So I chose to employ a private midwife who I trust enormously and who could guide me through my labour, to achieve the best possible outcome.

Birth is not always a safe process, but independent midwives offer one-on-one support and many years of experience to help guide women (through what is essentially a normal physiological process) to achieve the best outcome for mothers and babies. Studies support this assertion when examining low risk pregnancies. Why intervene in a process that both women and midwives are happy with?

If, as a government, you decide midwives require indemnity insurance to continue practicing, then why not offer to subsidise their premiums? An option provided to obstetricians and other health professionals at great cost to taxpayers. Imagine the outcry if women were suddenly told they cannot choose to have a caesarean?

As an Australian, I believe I have a civil right to have access to medical help, but I also believe I can birth my babies where I choose. Private midwives bridge this gap between institutionalised and independent birth - why take this option away?

I know I am just one voice, but I hope my experience helps you to understand how passionate I am about homebirth, and how incredible the experience was for me and my family. It is not something we choose lightly as birthing women, but we choose it because we believe it offers the safest, most positive experience for us and our babies.

Thank you for your time,

Anna Griffith