

To whom it may concern,

In 1998 I was fortunate to birth at home in Brisbane - she was our second child, the first having been born in a progressive, world- renowned London birth unit. It was a peaceful, loving and inspiring end to a great pregnancy. At no time did we consider we needed to attend a hospital because we had the full support of two midwives and the hospital was on standby in case our birth did not progress as planned.

It is with great sadness that I now hear assisted home-births will become all but impossible from next year. This decision makes no sense, except if one becomes cynical and considers where the pressure might be coming from. As you are aware, home-births are legal in many other developed and developing countries in the world and statistically speaking adverse outcomes in what appear to be low-risk pregnancies are no worse than hospital births. Speaking from experience, living the the UK and the Netherlands, women are offered home-birth as an equal choice.

So why can Australia not "get it together"? When there was a problem with doctor's insurance, a solution was found. How come we cannot find a solution in this case too? I would be grateful if someone could explain this to me.

For the record, even the present climate of midwives operating without insurance - a far from ideal situation - has led to a shortage. Without being in a circle of women having babies, I am still aware of a number in the past year who have birthed alone when there was no midwife available, rather than go to hospital. It is hard to see how there will be any home-birth midwives operating from mid next year - so what happens then? It's obvious - more women forced to go it alone with more risk to them and their babies. Is this really a situation we want?

If home-birth can be a viable option in many other developed countries, why can it not be here?

I am among a growing number of Australian women making conscious and informed decisions about their health and that of their family members. We are taking responsibility. Hopefully this can also include being able to birth with a midwife present. Thankyou for your time and I look forward to hearing your answers.

Heidi Ross