

Dear Nicola Roxon and others whom it may concern,

Nicola, I am writing in relation to the following items before the Senate Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009  
<<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22legislation/billhome/r4151%22>>

Midwife Professional Indemnity (Commonwealth Contribution) Scheme Bill 2009

<<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22legislation/billhome/r4153%22>>

Midwife Professional Indemnity (Run-off Cover Support Payment) Bill 2009  
<<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22legislation/billhome/r4152%22>>

I am 31 years old and currently planning to start a family in the near future. As a young woman I have been privileged to mature in Australian society where women's choices are respected and women's rights are supported by government policy.

Recently I made some enquiries about what my birthing options would be should I become pregnant and was shocked to find that my choices were very limited. In Brisbane the models of care that are offered are extremely limited whether looking for care in the private or public system whilst midwife led homebirths are a very expensive option that is certainly out of reach for my partner and I due to the current lack of Medicare rebates for their services.

I have known many women who have birthed at home and hearing their positive experiences I was most interested in this model of care. My hopes of achieving a low intervention birth would be statistically supported by a homebirth or by going to a birthing centre like the one at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, however after some inquiries I found that there is only one birthing centre in Brisbane and to secure a birth in this it is by lottery because there is such high demand - that tells me that women do want low intervention births, they do want a mid wife led experience and that given the cost of homebirths and lack of insurance may mothers are keen to use this alternative, however their access is seriously limited by available places.

I don't believe my expectations of choice in relation to my birthing options are unfounded in this society. Given the choice I would prefer to have a midwife led homebirth because I believe the evidence and statistics support this model of care for low risk births.

With the currently bills before the senate I realise this choice will be removed and my only pathway to securing a birthing option that has some of the qualities that I believe I have a right to will be decided by lottery and I do not think that is good enough. If the right to midwife led homebirth is taken away then that needs to be accompanied by significant changes in the access women/ families have to birthing options that are shown to have low intervention rates

I feel very strongly that the lack of support this government is showing midwives practicing in a home setting is both undermining of women's rights and directly against the available evidence from other Western Nations that do support homebirths. I do not want to speculate on the deeper motivations of the policy however I will say that I feel incredibly let down by this government and I hope that this policy will not put my family in a position of choosing a free birth because allowing a midwife to attend will be illegal or because not enough birthing centres are provided to cope with the demand.

Governments are ultimately responsible for delivering the will of the people and I believe Australians want choice and I believe that women and families have a right to it.

Kind regards,

Chelsea Ferguson