

It is the fundamental right of all women to be able to choose where and how to give birth. "Bill B" is going to take away the right of a woman to birth her baby at home under the guidance of the midwife of her choice.

I am the mother of 4 healthy children. My older children, now aged 11 and 9, were birthed in a birth centre in Sydney - no complications and we left hospital the same day they were born. I moved to SE Queensland in 2004, and my younger children, now aged 3 and 4, were birthed at home with a registered midwife.

My home births far surpassed my birth centre births. In a large part this was due to being "at home" and therefore able to control the "space" for the births, which includes all people who were present both during the birth and before and after the births. Having built a relationship with my midwife in the months leading up to the births made a massive difference - no changing shifts and having strangers involved in such an intimate experience. My other children and my husband were present when they wished to be during the labour and birth, and for children to meet their new sibling within a couple of minutes of being birthed is an incredible moment they shall no doubt treasure for their whole lives.

My registered midwife was at all times checking on the welfare of both myself and the baby. However she was gentle and did not make my babies cry or wake them up when they were fast asleep - we were treated at all times with respect and compassion. My registered midwife carried oxygen etc with her, so I knew that she was ready and able to carry out all procedures (except an emergency caesarean) that they would be able to do in a hospital.

My midwife had encouraged me to book into the Gold Coast Hospital as backup - in case of needing to transfer - and the doctors and nurses that I encountered in my visits to the hospital were very encouraging towards me having a homebirth.

I signed a contract with my midwife that included me accepting that she had no insurance. As I understand it, this new legislation will make my midwife unable to register as a midwife if she has no insurance. If the Australian Government wish private midwives to have insurance then they should be indemnifying private midwives' insurance, much as I understand they do for obstetricians. Instead they appear to be going to deregister private registered midwives - a perplexing state of events which does no favours to Australian women.

Every woman deserves to be able to choose where and with whom she will birth.

International statistics show that birthing at home with a midwife is as safe as birthing in a hospital - for a normal low risk woman.

I have always thought of Australia as being a country that supports the rights of all its people, without prejudice. However, this latest witch hunt against private midwives is designed to take away a fundamental right that all women should have. If this legislation goes through, then women who do not wish to birth in a hospital or birth centre setting (most birth centres are inside hospitals) will NOT have the choice of birthing at home with a private registered midwife. If they want to birth at home they will have no way of telling what the qualifications of the person supporting them are... and they may well end up birthing at home without any professional back up. This will be a return to the dark ages.

Please support the rights of Australian women and make sure they have private midwifery care at home as a birth option.

Sincerely,

Maryen Cairns