

I am writing as a mother of two children. My son was born in October 2007, at home. It was the most amazing, empowering experience in my life.

Unfortunately, from July 2010, it seems that this experience will no longer be available to my daughter or my son's spouse or anyone else. This is as a result of the lack of private indemnity insurance for independent midwives.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. However, it is not acceptable to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is years behind nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

While there are fantastic hospital based home birth programs available, they have strict criteria (including geographical) and are still governed by rigid hospital rules.

With caesarean rates at nearly 30%, well above the World Health Organisations recommendation of 15%, women who do want to provide have a home birth will not have the same choice as those who want a caesarean birth.

My son's birth was the most intimate affair, he was caught by his father, born in the bed he was conceived. His big sister wasn't dragged to a big hospital to meet him, she just came down to our bedroom. I am so fortunate to have had a wonderful midwife to assist me. If insurance is not provided for independent midwives, births like his will no longer happen.

I insist that private home birth midwives be indemnified as a matter of priority and urgency. It is essential - for the health of our babies and women that insurance be provided so that midwives are able to register from July 2010. The Maternity Services Review pointed to our excellent record of safety for women and babies - let's ensure that this can continue.

Yours Sincerely,

Ms Candida Virgo