

Writing to your local politicians

Writing to your local members of parliament can be a good way to raise your concerns about homebirth, maternity care and the options that are available to birthing women. It helps them to understand that the issues are important to voters.

How should I get in touch?

You can write a letter or an email. You should include your contact details so that your MP can respond and so that they can see you live in their electorate.

How do I find out who to write to?

You will have two MPs representing your local area – your state or territory MP and your federal MP.

You can find details for your federal MP at the Australian Electoral Commission's website: www.aec.gov.au

You can find details for your state or territory MP on either your state's electoral commission website or your state Parliament website (you can find these through an internet search).

What should I write?

The most important thing is to write in your own words. Although it is easier to send a form letter they do not carry much weight (precisely because they are easy to send). Taking the time to write your own letter or email will greatly increase the chances of getting a response and having your concerns taken seriously.

What you write will depend on what level of government your MP is part of, the issues that are important to you and the issues that are most relevant to your local community. The suggestions below are not a checklist but cover some issues that might be of importance to you. Its probably best to just stick to one or two issues. You should ask that your local MP takes up your issue with the Health Minister and ask them to get back to you.

If you are writing to your **Federal MP** some of the issues you might like to raise are:

- **Homebirth:**
 - Your concern that homebirth with a registered midwife may not be possible after June 2013 unless midwives are able to access insurance for homebirth care or further exemptions to the requirement for insurance are given;
 - The importance of women who choose to homebirth being able to access the services of registered midwives;

- Whether there are any public homebirth options in your state and whether you are able to access them. Let them know if homebirth with a private midwife is your only option.
- **Maternity reforms:**
 - Any personal experience that you have had with collaborative arrangements or with getting medicare rebates for private midwifery care.

If you are writing to your **state or territory MP** some of the issues you could cover are:

- **Homebirth:**
 - Let them know that you want privately practising midwives to still be able to care for homebirthing women in your state after June 2013 (NB this won't be relevant if you are in NT);
 - Request the development or expansion of publicly funded homebirth programs in your state.
- **Maternity reforms:**
 - Ask what steps are being taken in your state to give hospital visiting access to privately practising midwives.
- **Continuity of care:**
 - You could refer to the options that are available for women in your area to have continuity of care with a midwife and ask for a caseload midwifery model to be introduced or expanded.

You should write about your own experiences with the above issues but keep it brief. Your local member probably doesn't have the time to read your birth story!

If you are keen, request a meeting with your local MP. You will probably have to follow up with a call to their electorate office to make an appointment.