

Publicly Funded Homebirth Position Statement



Publicly funded homebirth programs offer accessible births at home

Publicly funded homebirth programs provide women with an affordable way to birth at home in the care of registered midwives. Women in NSW are increasingly seeking to birth their babies at home, often as a result of trauma experienced in a prior hospital birth.

Evidence shows that publicly funded homebirth programs have the following benefits:

- Lower costs and resource use compared to hospital births
- Improved maternal satisfaction
- No greater risk of neonatal mortality or morbidity
- Fewer birth interventions

Homebirth with a Privately Practicing Midwife (PPM) is not a viable option for many women in Australia due to affordability and accessibility (not enough midwives providing this service, particularly in regional areas). Some women who cannot access a PPM choose to freebirth without the safety and support of a registered midwife rather than birth again within the hospital system. Even where they may not feel completely safe with this option.

Publicly funded homebirth programs improve the public perception of homebirth by normalising it as a legitimate and safe model of care.

NSW Health should expand program access and inclusion criteria

We aim to have more publicly funded homebirth programs established around New South Wales to increase access and affordability of homebirth as an option for women and their families. We aim to improve these programs based on consumer feedback.

We advocate for the expansion of eligibility criteria for women in publicly funded homebirth programs. Many women have reported negative experiences due to the restrictive policies of these programs. Women are frequently excluded from these programs very late in their pregnancies due to manageable factors such as gestational diabetes, leaving them without a care provider and causing unnecessary stress for them and their families. Changes to the eligibility criteria could improve outcomes for women and uptake of public homebirth programs.

The NSW Birth Trauma Inquiry supported expanding public homebirth

The recent NSW Inquiry into Birth Trauma heard about the importance of publicly funded homebirth programs and included the following recommendation in its report:

Recommendation 26: That the NSW Government investigate expanding publicly funded homebirth services to all NSW Local Health Districts.

The NSW Government supported this recommendation in its response, noting the importance of access to publicly funded homebirth programs. The response stated that the NSW Government will consider the needs of women and families to “ensure that women’s care can be provided in the right place, at the right time”. *Connecting, listening and responding: A Blueprint for Action – Maternity Care in NSW* (2023) also acknowledges that stakeholder consultation found strong support for public homebirth options.

You can call for a homebirth program in your local area

Would you like to see a publicly funded homebirth program in your local area? You can use our templates below to contact your local Members of Parliament and [Local Health District](#). If you are involved in a local campaign, please [contact us](#) for support and assistance. You can also connect with your [Local Homebirth Support Group](#) to grow your campaign.

Template letters

You might like to use the below template letter.

We suggest contacting the following:

- Your local state member of parliament (find them [here](#))
- Ryan Park MP, NSW Minister for Health (via [online form](#))
- Mark Butler MP, Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care (minister.butler@health.gov.au)
- Your [Local Health District](#)

Dear [name]

Publicly funded homebirth in [local area]

I live in [your local area] and am writing to you to request access to publicly funded homebirth for women in [local area].

I am a <woman/mother/parent who has birthed at home/is interested in birthing at home>. Homebirth is important to me because [I feel this is the safest care option for me/my previous experience in the hospital system resulted in birth trauma/women have a right to decide where they wish to give birth/other personal reason or story].

[If I was unable to access a publicly funded homebirth I would consider free birth without the support of a trained and registered midwife. This would not be my preference as I do not personally feel confident and safe in this birth option.]

Publicly funded homebirth programs provide women with an affordable way to birth at home in

the care of registered midwives. Women in NSW are increasingly seeking to birth their babies at home, often as a result of trauma experienced in a prior hospital birth. While Private Practicing Midwives can be hired to attend homebirths, demand exceeds supply, many geographical areas are under serviced and the cost is high. I believe women in [local area] should have a public homebirth program to ensure homebirth is an option for women who miss out on or can't afford care with a Private Midwife.

Evidence shows that publicly funded homebirth programs have the following benefits:

- Lower costs and resource use compared to hospital births
- Improved maternal satisfaction
- No greater risk of neonatal mortality or morbidity
- Fewer birth interventions

The recent NSW Birth Trauma Inquiry recommended the expansion of publicly funded homebirth programs in NSW. In response to this Inquiry, Ryan Park MP apologised to women for the failures of the maternity system and accepted the Inquiry's recommendations.

This is an important issue for [women/mothers/parents] in [local area] who wish to have access to safe and affordable births at home, in the care of a registered midwife. I look forward to hearing from you about this matter.

Kind regards,

[Your name]

Homebirth New South Wales www.homebirthnsw.org.au hello@homebirthnsw.org.au