

I write to express my concern about the above bills. I understand that these bills will enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospital.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is not acceptable however to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. 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.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

My wife and I are having a second child later this year and have chosen to homebirth with the assistance of an independent midwife. So far the experience has been incredibly more personal and satisfying than ante-natal care we experienced through the hospital system with our first child. I feel fortunate that I have an income that allows us to afford this type of care, which incidentally I feel should be subsidised as it keeps people out of hospital beds unnecessarily. I also feel fortunate that we are having our second child before this legislation comes into effect. I am appalled to think that we face the prospect of having no choice when it comes to how we bring our future children into the world.

Yours sincerely

Peter Bevin