

Dear Senator Moore

I am writing to express my concern over the above bills.

However, first I should introduce myself. I am currently undertaking a PhD in social research and I also have a 1st class honours degree in B Engineering/B Arts (International Studies). I am also a mum to two beautiful children, Anneliesa (3) and Jesiah (1). Why would I tell you this? Well, it seems the view of a home-birthing mother within today's society is one of a fanatical hippie, with no regards to her child's safety. I can assure you this is far from the case. My husband and I researched very carefully the decision to safely homebirth our son.

On doing so, we found overwhelming scientific evidence that a planned homebirth, attended by a skilled midwife is just as safe, if not safer, than hospital birth. We were amazed to discover that in the Netherlands approximately 30% of babies are born at home and the Netherlands have amongst the best perinatal outcomes in the world. We discussed at length with our midwives what would necessitate a transfer to hospital. Our midwives had resuscitation equipment on hand, and the necessary drugs to immediately deliver the placenta if necessary.

If you closely examine the neonatal mortality statistics, you will find that you cannot attribute homebirth deaths to dangerous practice. To congenital abnormalities, underlying medical conditions, people birthing their babies unattended and then killing them (no doubt because the pregnancy was unplanned) Yes. Deaths from all of these occur in hospital too, and with much greater frequency than they do at home (with the exception of the last, as clearly that is a little difficult to achieve in the hospital). However, for a baby birthed at home, with a skilled midwife in attendance, with access to necessary medical equipment (eg resuscitation and the necessary drugs) in the event of an emergency No. There is no evidence to support this outlandish claim that the AMA is perpetuating.

The birth of my son is by far one of the most memorable experiences of my life. I went into strong labour just after 12am. My midwives were there from 1:30am. I quietly laboured, in the comfort of my home. My midwives were there all the time, unobtrusively monitoring the contractions. I gave birth to our son at 5:54am with my husband and our 2.5 year old daughter by my side. No need to make a potentially eventful car trip to hospital (plenty of unplanned out of hospital births happen in the car, where it would've been much safer for these women to birth at home). No need to arrange a middle of the night babysitter. Just another night along with a normal, natural life event. My healthy 4.25kg son was perfectly fine, as was I neither of us suffered any complications. He took to the breast immediately and without issue. Given Australia's incredibly poor breastfeeding rates and the public health issue that this presents, it is poignant to note that breastfeeding rates are much higher in uncomplicated birth settings.

It is time for the government to move forward and support safe homebirth.

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, and for this I applaud the government.

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.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Soliman