

As a mother who opted for a home birth and eventually gave birth to my son via emergency caesarean, 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. Birth is a very special time and women deserve to be able to chose with whom and where to give birth. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to have a midwife, who was with my partner and I throughtout our pregnancy and birth. Despite the fact that we ended up in hospital, it was important to me to have the opportunity to opt for a homebirth. Midwives are extremely knowledgeable, experienced and responsible and they must be supported by the health system!

Many 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. My family and I urge Australia to follow suit.

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.

I appreciate your time and welcome your comments on this issue.

Kind Regards,

Lissa Villeneuve