

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Dear Senator Moore

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.

I gave birth at home with the support of my midwife and my partner. I felt completely safe and in the best hands. My midwife supported me through my pregnancy and she knew exactly how to support me through the birth without the aid of drugs or intervention. I wouldn't choose to have my baby in a hospital unless I or my baby had a serious medical problem. It was so important for me to be in my own environment and relaxed, and as a result I had a smooth problem free birthing experience. When I have another baby I will find a midwife who will help me have my baby at home. There are amazing women out there doing good work. How can the Government get away with taking this basic fundamental right away from a mother? It's a disgrace.

Yours sincerely

Yensha Shaw