

I have been a midwife for more than 25 years, 20 of these providing care to women who have chosen a known midwife to support them during pregnancy, labour, birth and in their postnatal time. I believe this to be a very important way to promote optimal health and emotional wellbeing for women, their baby and for the whole family. I worked as an independent midwife, maternal & child health nurse, and gave women the choice of where to give birth to their babies, with 50% of women choosing during their pregnancy, to give birth at home, and all this paid for by the individual, not as part of taxpayers money. I am at present, taking a 12month sabbatical in Bali writing the 3rd edition of my book, which includes information on birth at home, with a known midwife as the primary carer.

I also earn income from hiring water tubs for use during labour, a very safe & cheap alternative to expensive epidurals, and have published my Masters Thesis on the use of water for labour & birth, at home. This book, distributed world wide, also generates income (Taxable) for me and my family. If I am not able to practice as an independent midwife, allowing women to birth at home, I will not only lose my income, but Australia will be seen as a 'backward' nation!

I write this email to you 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.

Yours sincerely

Anne Genevieve Sprague