

I am writing 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.

While I see a lot of value in these initiatives - I am deeply concerned by the exclusion of private midwife supported home-birth from the indemnity arrangement. The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering.

I hope this is an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

In addition the international research supporting the safety and benefits of home-birthing - a statistically significant number of consumer stories about a desire and beautiful outcomes for home-birthing have been submitted to the government during the Maternity Services Review.

I strongly urge you to listen carefully to the voices and stories of consumers of maternity services. If you have women and families sharing with you stories of safe, amazing home-birth experiences - this is such a strong indicator that home-birthing is a viable, safe option for women and their families that should be supported and not disabled by our government.

If the government is not at a stage where they are able to catch up to international leaders in maternity care, who support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme (look to United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand) - this is very unfortunate and disappointing.

Actually passing legislation that effectively outlaws private midwife supported homebirth is even more preposterous and backward thinking than not providing subsidies to support this amazing option that Australian women and families are pleading with you to protect.

I can not emphasise enough how important it is to me, and many other Australian families, that you protect our right to birth our children in safe, nurturing, family-oriented home environments, with the support of private midwives.

I am concerned a major reason the government has not supported home-birth options in this Bill, or in the recent response to the Maternity Services review, is due to pressure or lack of support from medically-driven maternity service providers.

I have a mental health background, and I see some scary parallels between the abuse of power and lack of evidence-based research historically guiding practice decisions in mental health care, and the blind eye turned by traditional medical practitioners to research and international policies that clearly support the safety and benefits of midwife-supported homebirths.

There is an over-abundance of consumer stories around how traditional models of care - created and driven by the medical profession - inadvertently damage people. I entered into the health profession because I wanted to help vulnerable people and I am fairly confident that 99% of health professionals are driven by this same motivation (at least initially).

In my work with senior leadership groups from the QLD mental health sector, when I speak around what is required for us to move forward in reforming mental health services, one of the issues I raise is that our society puts the medical profession on a pedestal, unrealistically expecting them to be fully responsible for fixing and maintaining our health and wellbeing. This cycle disempowers individuals to discover what works best for them and take responsibility for their own health and well-being, and it is something I strongly believe needs to be challenged in all areas of health.

It occurred to me that the government passing legislation that withholds support to midwives who are fully trained and competent in supporting women to birth in their homes due to pressure from influential pockets of the medical profession

- actually feeds into this cycle of undesired power imbalance and unrealistic expectations that the medical profession should be held accountable for all areas of everyone's health and wellbeing.

I would like to leave you with a list of some of the benefits I experienced birthing my beautiful daughter in a private-midwife supported home-birth.

- exceptionally high quality continuity of care

- messages of hope, joy and wonder at this marvellous experience of birthing a beautiful child

- our birthing environment and support was created and provided exactly as I requested, there was absolutely no pressure from anyone to take any course of action I wasn't completely educated about or comfortable with

- my partner, mother and brother were all present with our midwife and doula as our beautiful creation entered this world

- my little one's first environment outside of my body was a loving, nurturing, warm home that she was able to slowly connect with, completely at her own pace

- my father and other brothers were just outside the door and joined us in celebrating her arrival soon after the event

- for the next hours and days Tataria was able to snuggle into the safety, comfort and warmth of the arms of those who had already connected to her during the 9months of pregnancy (her mother, father, Midwife Sonya, Doula Leah, Nanna, Papa, and Uncles)

- I received an absolutely amazing six weeks of love, care and support from my midwife and family as I learnt to negotiate my new role of motherhood, with no signs post-natal depression or psychosis and a beautifully healthy and happy baby

This was an amazing, blessed experience for my first-born child and our family.

Please do not take away my right to access such beautiful birthing support.

If possible, I would greatly appreciate to be updated on the outcome of the Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills.

Kindly,

Courtney O'Connor