

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. Having worked in the UK as a National Health midwife providing home & hospital births to women in rural England, 5% of women chose home births and had better outcomes in terms of interventions, breast feeding and postnatal depression. Home birth is something every woman has right to and she has a right to the midwife of her choice. Public funded & independent midwives should have access to Medicare, the pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity given women greater choices for their birth.

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

Your name

Angela Pridham RN M.Sc (Midwifery) GC MH Mother of 2