

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.

It really scares me that I and many other women are facing a future of homebirth, ALONE without support from a registered midwife. Having experienced a traumatic birth at hospital and a beautiful, empowering birth at home, I know I am one of those women who needs the familiarity, comfort and trust of my home environment, and of my midwife. I would choose homebirth, without a midwife over going to hospital. I would put myself and my child at risk, because I have been denied my optimal choice. That is crazy!

It took me two and a bit years to recover from my first hospital experience. After a long labour, where the contractions completely stopped(at change of shift), I had an episiotomy with third degree tear, right through to my anus. The doctor stitched my perineum too tight. The muscle that controls the bladder was damaged (a nuerogenic bladder) and I was not expected to urinate by myself for the rest of my life. I felt that these problems occurred because I didn't feel safe at the hospital or with the unfamiliar midwives.

With the birth of my second child, I had the privilege to have an independent registered midwife who provided care throughout my pregnancy until my son was six weeks old. Her knowledge and constant care enabled me to have a drug free, calm, GENTLE birth. Yes, I mean gentle. How many people can say that? I felt the whole experience healed me physically and emotionally..

I am really angry that our right to choose a supported homebirth is in danger of being taken away. The fact is women are going to have homebirths. Help us to have them safely with a registered midwife. It is a basic human right.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Frederick