

Dear Senator Moore

I write to express my concern about the bills named in the email header. 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.

My partner and I decided to have a home birth with our first child and found the ongoing care (and presence at the birth) of our chosen midwife to be incredibly beneficial. Although the birth did not end up occurring at home, as our boy decided to join us rather early, when we arrived at hospital the birth went forward as if at home anyway. The care of our midwife was all that we needed, and it was a wonderful experience - safe, straightforward and free of complications.

This stands in stark contrast to the many birth experiences of friends who chose the conventional route. Their stories are littered with instances of unnecessary complications, interventions and painful surgical procedures. Pregnancy is not an illness, as would seem to be the prevailing wisdom, at least if these proposed bills are to be passed. Women have been doing this for eons - why is it now suddenly fraught with danger?

Frankly, I am horrified that a woman's right to birth in the manner of her choosing is about to be taken away. Moreover I am deeply saddened by the probability that wonderful women with many valuable years of experience in childbirth, such as our midwife, will effectively be put out of a job. Not only is this madness, but it is an affront to the basic rights of ALL women in this country, not just the hippies and crackpots in the minority (as I'm sure they are perceived) who choose to take control of their bodies and their birth experiences, rather than submitting to the will of a highly paternalised public health system. One must question what is really driving this proposal . . .

I still like to think of our country as a great place - a forward thinking place. Hopefully you do too.

Yours sincerely

Richard Giliberto