

Dear Senator Moore

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

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.

I am a mother of seven children and have borne four of my children in our home. On one occasion, without any medical personnel present. This was not by choice. I could not find a midwife who would attend me because of the indemnity risks. We were living in Charters Towers at the time and there was no doctor at the hospital. The hospital was going to send me to Townsville in an ambulance for delivery. As my labour was often very short, this was not acceptable. A delivery in my own home was much preferable to a delivery on the side of the road.

As a woman who has experienced many sides of the birthing debate, I will vote for midwives every time! But, I will always encourage women to look at the home-birthing option as the first choice in any low risk pregnancy.

Mothers take responsibility for their children every day. Why should the birth be out of their hands? Homebirth is not a selfish decision. It is one made with all care and the best intentions of the whole family in mind. That decision can be made a whole lot safer with a certified midwife in attendance.

Yours sincerely

Maureen Staples