

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.

As a intensely private person, I wish for the birth of my children to take place in a comfortable, familiar atmosphere, attended by people I have personally chosen and feel relaxed with. I also wish to receive continuity of care throughout my pregnancy. With these strong desires, I have decided to give birth in my own home with a independant registered midwife, and I have been trying to fall pregnant with my first child for several months now in order to beat the impending "deadline". However if I do not conceive by September 2009, I will be faced with a local hospital with a choice of only one GP, and and a limited nursing and midwifery staff. So limited in fact that there are several days of the week with no midwives rostered on and expectant mothers are advised to also book into the Coffs Harbour District Hospital. However, the Coffs Harbour Hospital maternity system is usually already overbooked. In theory this could leave me in a situation where I have an unattended birth. This is a frightening scenario - as is giving birth in a hospital environment, where the medical intervention rate worries me. Unfortunately, as I live in a rural area I have no access to state funded homebirth models.

This choice to have an independant midwife is not a light one as I would have high costs to pay (about \$5000), but this is very important to me and I have been saving for several years to pay for a homebirth. After much research I strongly believe that for a healthy low-risk pregnancy, a midwife-assisted homebirth is the better and safer option - not only for the mother, but also for the child. This in fact, is the motivating factor behind my and my partner's decision to choose a homebirth - if we can.

The right to chose both my birthplace and my caregiver is, to me, fundamental. And yet it looks like that choice could be taken away. Please ensure that women can continue to legally choose midwifery care for their planned homebirths.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Hutchins