

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.

My wife and I both work in Theatres and have worked in several hospitals throughout Australia, my wife is an R.N and I am a Periop assistant.

We have seen first hand the effects on mother and child from giving birth in a hospital. The fear that is created and the lack of control given to a mother to make a proper informative choice is well below an acceptable standard. It is too common place for surgeons to withhold crucial information from a mother making life changing decisions because it would take that little bit longer or just because the surgeons beliefs come before hers!

We understand that some people rely on surgeons to help them make their decisions; we also understand that many people are happy with their hospital birth experience. What we don't understand is why people don't deserve the right to choose to have a home birth.

My wife gave birth to our (now 2.5yr old) little boy at home in a birthing pool. We chose to homebirth because a proven key factor to a problem free birth is a calm, familiar and safe environment for the mother and child (something rarely found in a hospital) surrounded by the love and support of their family and a professional homebirth midwife.

Our homebirth midwife educated us better than any prenatal course we have ever seen and made it very clear that if there were any complications that we would need to transfer to a hospital.

We believe that hospitals are vital for a mother who has had complications or irregularities throughout her pregnancy and we are grateful to have a hospital available if we were to have complications while giving birth. However we also strongly believe in the well known fact that giving birth is a natural process, not a condition that needs a medical procedure!

Our final thought, why would we choose to give birth in a hospital surrounded by sickness and disease relying on the cleanliness of underpaid over worked staff when we can give birth in our own natural environment rather than a foreign one??

If you choose to amend these Bills as proposed you will not be stopping people from home birthing, but forcing them to give birth without the assistance of a professional, in turn, this WILL fall back in your hands.

Yours sincerely

Ben Clements