

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'm a mum of two, a proud Australian but also someone who is deeply concerned about the recent legislation changes in regards to choosing homebirth with a private practice midwife.

My husband Peter and I had the wonderful experience of having our second son Harry at home in September 2007. I call Harry's birth my 'healing birth' as we had an unfortunate negative experience with the birth of my first son in a private hospital in 2004.

Before having my first son I like many in our Australian culture believed that hospital was the only place babies should be born whether the pregnancy was low risk or not. I presumed that having an obstetrician at a private hospital would be the blue-ribbon standard of care. Unfortunately

that was not to be.

Second time round I was determined that things would be different and I was going to have that positive birth that I missed out on with my first child.

I spoke to some women who had homebirths and started to see a consistent theme of having beautiful, positive experiences. There was an absence of horrible, dramatic stories that often ended in caesareans. I researched homebirths and looked into other countries that had high homebirth rates that were supported by their national health policy and had some of the

best maternal outcomes in the world. I certainly didn't make my decision with the blinkers on.

My husband and I then met with a midwife in private practice. This was the beginning of a wonderful journey down the path of homebirth. The benefits were immeasurable. I got to enjoy the continuity of care with a midwife of my choice. I was being looked after by a highly skilled health professional who provided the blue-standard of care I was looking for.

We had many discussions including hospital transfer if the need were to arise.

Harry's birth was beautiful and normal, just as nature intended. No interference, no drugs, just quality care, skill, respect, trust and the support I needed, in the security and privacy of my own home. Just hours after having Harry my eldest son Jack awoke and padded down the stairs in his pyjama suit and got to meet his new baby brother. Just another ordinary day for a 3 year old. Not phased or overwhelmed and best of all no separation from his mum.

It was a privilege to have that choice, and a choice that needs to be protected for our future generations. Hospital births certainly have their place, there is no denying that, and many women feel safe in hospitals with drugs and machines close by. And that is their choice and that choice is respected. But homebirth is a choice made by women and their families for many reasons and that choice needs to be respected as well.

Please help to protect homebirth as a choice for all Australians.

Yours Sincerely

Amanda Thorpe