

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 husband and I travelled around Australia all of last year and whilst on the road we met a doctor from the Netherlands. We got onto the subject of home birthing and she informed me that it is UNCOMMON for a woman to have her baby in a hospital unless they are classed high risk. She said that it gives hospitals more time and much needed beds to service real MEDICAL conditions. Childbirth is a natural process for women and for those who understand this and have faith in their mind and body to give birth in their own environment deserve the support from our own government. My sister had a home birth and her midwife visited her at home, monitoring everything that would happen in a hospital, but the main difference was for the last two weeks of her pregnancy, it happened everyday. This service would not happen if she was having a hospital birth as she found out for her second child, for medical reasons had to have a caesarean. My point here is that the bond she created with her midwife gave her peace of mind as she was also the one that delivered her baby, not who ever was on call that night.

Please consider all these stories when you make the decision for the funding Claire. Australia would be proud to be part of a confident nation that has the support of it's own government.

Warmest regards,

Maria Wyr