

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 believe to choose to give birth at home is a basic human right.

A woman should be able to choose to give birth where she feels most comfortable, and to bring babies into the world in the most peaceful and calm space, that being her own home.

I am a healthy, intelligent and capable woman and I feel that birthing is a natural process that women are innately capable of doing without interference. But they need support, support of a qualified and experienced midwife. Throughout the birthing experience problems can arise, therefore a midwife should be present. I fear that if the government takes midwives out of homebirths huge repercussions will take place. As there will always be some women who wish to give birth at home.

So homebirths will still take place but without the knowledge and wisdom, safety and care of a qualified midwife. This is already happening in Queensland where I once lived, women are birthing at home with only friends around her. This is very dangerous. Midwives need to present at births.

Homebirths are being encouraged in England, and are publicly funded, the government realized they would save money by sending midwives into women's homes and keep the beds free for those who need to be in a hospital.

Australia needs to move forward in this area as well. Homebirths should not only be an accessible option for women but they should also be publicly funded.

I had to travel 45 minutes in labor to get to a hospital for my first baby, as there was no midwife in the region available. The midwives at Murwillumbah hospital commented on how I was such a natural birther and what a terrible shame I could not have stayed home. They said I needn't go to hospital next time as I was definitely capable of doing it at home. So if I am blessed to fall pregnant again I will stay at home and pray that a midwife will be available to me.

I hope the government make a wise decision with this issue and keep homebirth an option for women. If not, there will still be homebirths and the consequences of not having a midwife will fall on the responsibility of the government who brought in such a ridiculous law.

Yours sincerely

Jane Robinson