

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 have had the pleasure of giving birth in a house, with my husband and two wonderful midwives present. In my second pregnancy I was carrying twins and developed pre-eclampsia and these ladies accompanied me to the hospital, where they created an amazing continuity of emotional support. The relationship that developed with these two ladies was invaluable; not only were they there to detect the baby's heartbeat for the first time, but coached my husband and I throughout the lead-up to two births, one very simple and the other terribly complicated and emotional. Such a support were they, that we were receiving follow-up support (including home-cooked meals!) six weeks after birth and we remain in contact 3 years later.

I have also had the privilege of being a support person to one of my closest friends, who gave birth in her home 6 years ago. Not only was this a special event to take part in, but I consider it a part of womanhood to help other women give birth, educating myself and learning about completely natural processes in a very conducive environment.

Please support the rights of women to choose these experiences.

Yours sincerely

Amy Boyd