

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.

As both a mother and a student midwife, I am well aware of the huge benefits of homebirth with a chosen midwife. It is clear that the safety of homebirth for women with normal pregnancies has been verified in numerous studies of high quality. Homebirth is safe, this is a fact.

Of course, homebirth is not for everybody nor should it be. However, there will always be women and their families choosing homebirth and it is imperative that skilled professionals' i.e. qualified midwives are able to attend these.

The benefits of a known midwife to the childbearing woman and her family are also well documented. It is important that women are able to choose their midwife, just like they would choose other health care providers such as a doctor, osteopath or acupuncturist. This is a fundamental

right. Thus, independent midwives must be supported to continue to provide care for those women that choose to birth at home.

My husband and I chose a private midwife as our primary carer for the birth of our daughter. That midwife provided care in our home from the tenth week of my pregnancy until four weeks post partum. I gave birth to my daughter at home with the support of my husband and the excellent care of my midwife. We believe that normal birth is a family event, not a medical one. We feel we have given our daughter and family the best start to life. We have also contributed to the 'de-cluttering' of an already overburdened hospital system in the process.

Yours sincerely

Jaia Shanti Baer