

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.

Having birthed my last child at home, because I was classed "high risk" and could not access a hospital birth I desired, and after five previous hospital births I am passionate about motherhood and midwifery.

I could wax eloquent of the beauty, the sacredness, the mystery and the magic that it is to birth a child and to see one born surrounded in an atmosphere of love, welcome and grace. Nothing compares to it and for me having my son at home last year and just three weeks ago being a part of my daughters labour and birth at home and catching my granddaughter as she was birthed peacefully into the world are just experiences that we will treasure as a family for ever.

These are the feelings and the 'drug' if you like for want of a better word that spur me on. They feed a desire to think I can change the world, that I have something special to share that all women could/would want, that I have achieved something incredible that anyone could also achieve, if only they knew or could easily access and afford it.

My passion is no less but my heart carries the scars of many who do not want to hear, of wounds where ridicule and hostility are common place,

general misunderstanding abounds, and confusion around a complex political hot potato continue.

Midwives in Private Practise are good, sensible, articulate and dignified women. Yet when they present at hospitals with woman who require transfer, which is rarely by ambulance but done in a relaxed manner in a private car, or when they are talked about by fellow Medical Practitioners who work within the hospital system or when the media get's hold of this hot issue, they are made out to be pests or hippies and treated with great disrespect. They in turn are not disrespectful, particularly confronting, rude or obnoxious, ignorant or misinformed so why this dismissive attitude and open hostility towards them?

The thing is this issue is regarded as a marginal one which affects only a few, I disagree. The way our children are born affects us all. I see our home as the first reflection of what we would be like in society at large. The notion that birth is sacred space is not well recognised or regarded in our society. However just like death how we enter the world is significant. If you were to ask people to choose who was to be with you and where you would like to die, most would say with those that love and respect me, at home.

It is only in recent decades that we have been conditioned to fear birth and most significantly to fear birth at home.

This Bill B, if it passes through the senate in August will become legislation and birth within ones home will become something only remotely available through hospitals to a very select few and also something which a midwife is prohibited from assisting just by the mere fact she/he can not obtain professional indemnity insurance.

It would be a terrible circumstance to see women unable to choose to bring their babes to birth in their homes and midwives unable to lawfully attend them.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Aretha Vinson