

Dear Senator Moore

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

As I write this I have my healthy 1 week old son in my lap. For the duration of my pregnancy I researched the best way to ensure that my baby would enter the world healthy and psychologically intact. I ensured that I kept healthy and had regular check-ups to ensure I was progressing well. I also educated myself about the birth process. I chose home birth because after reading the research available I am certain that for healthy women this is not only the best but the safest way for a baby to enter this world. I think an essential part of having a homebirth is having a qualified midwife in attendance. My midwife has over 20 years of experience and her regular visits ensured that I felt confident to birth my baby in a calm and relaxed way without drugs or unnecessary interventions. We were also open to the possibility of a hospital transfer should things not have gone according to plan. My labour was uneventful and lasted only five hours - and I'm certain this is because I felt free and uninhibited. Hospitals are for sick people. A healthy pregnancy is not an illness. A qualified midwife is needed though to assess the situation and determine if or when a hospital may be necessary. Do not outlaw midwives. Women like myself will birth at home regardless. Look to the statistics of countries that allow homebirth and see that it is a viable option.

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.

Yours sincerely

Ariana-Rose Begg