

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. Remember that we do live in a democracy and should have the right to choose the way we give birth, especially if it is safer, better for mother and baby and costs the tax payer far less!

I have two children who were delivered by two different obstetricians in two different hospitals. I naively thought that changing obstetricians and hospitals for the birth of my second child would give me the support I needed to have a vaginal birth after caesarean. I was very wrong and ended up having another unnecessary caesarean. I have since found out that there was no medical reason for either caesarean. Despite being 'informed' I was poorly informed about the decisions being made and the reasons why. I take some responsibility for this but also attribute much to the current hospital system and the way it 'manages' each birth in the same way (by

the clock rather than by the mother and baby). I would like to have another baby, but I do not want to have another caesarean. The current hospital system would give me no option but to have a major operation. I would like this child to have a gentle entry to this world instead of the highly medicated and 'noisy' entry that my other children have had.

Following the birth of my first child I suffered from post-natal depression. This was attributed in part to my labour and the birth of my son. It was everything that I hadn't wanted for his entry to the world. I was induced and highly medicated before it was decided that he would be born by caesarean. I felt powerless and out of control during the labour as well as scared and frightened as I didn't know what was going on or what to expect - despite attending the hospital's antenatal classes.

I have done a lot of research since the birth of my daughter and have found out that it is safer for me to have a vaginal birth than another caesarean. The only option that I have is for a homebirth. I do not want to do this alone, I want to do it with the love and support of a registered midwife. I have found a midwife who has many years of experience and has also had a vaginal birth after two caesareans, and delivered many VBAC babies since that time. I look forward to seeing her throughout my pregnancy, and developing a trusting relationship with her that will assist me to remain calm and strong during labour.

Please don't take away her right to practice midwifery, and take away from Australian women the choice to deliver their babies in the safety and comfort of their own home. These proposed laws sentence me and many other Australian women to the operating table and life-threatening surgery. I urge you to consider our health when you discuss the legislation and keep giving Australian women the right to choose how and where they give birth.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah McLachlan