

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.

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 have four children, and have had four different birth experiences. My first birthing experience was complicated and ended in c-section in a hospital in the US. My second experience was a natural birth in a hospital birthing centre in Australia. My youngest two children were born at home with the help of a highly experienced independent midwife. This midwife provided all of the same prenatal and birthing services that I received in the hospitals, but I found the appointments, and most importantly the birth, to be far more relaxing in my home with my family surrounding me. In time, a relationship of trust and friendship formed between myself, my partner, my children, my mother (who also attended the births and is a registered nurse) and our midwife. It is amazing how many birthing issues (emotional, physical, mental) can come up and be addressed while having a cup of tea with your midwife in the comfort of your own home. The services my midwife provided me after the birth were far more extensive than I had previously experienced.

I realize that birthing at home does not appeal to everyone, and I do not feel the urge to "recruit" people to having homebirths. I also understand that the percentage of birthing women who choose to birth at home is relatively small. I do believe, however, that homebirth is a choice that women should have and that women who choose homebirth should have the same rights as women who choose different birthing options. I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Yours sincerely

Christine Dee