

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.

I have given birth in the private hospital system and at home with a homebirth midwife in attendance. I found my homebirth experience to be superior in terms of the continuity of care I received through my pregnancy, birth and postnatal period. During my homebirth I was able to avoid a series of interventions that had been imposed upon me during my hospital birth, thus leading to an easier post natal period. My midwife was a highly experienced professional. She brought with her a vast knowledge and skill, with over 25yrs experience attending homebirths. Had I encountered any problems during my pregnancy or birth, I would have most certainly sought further medical attention through the hospital system, but as I was healthy and my baby was healthy, this was unnecessary. I was supported well by my midwife and family and was able to attend to my other child during what was a simple and very normal life event.

I found my homebirth to be a wonderfully safe, family friendly experience, one that I would like to repeat in the future. However, I am extremely saddened at the thought that if I give birth again my only options are hospital or at home without the support and knowledge of an independent midwife. I'm also saddened that my two daughters could be denied the choice to birth at home safely with the support of a homebirth midwife. It is a choice I believe every woman should have the right to make.

Yours sincerely,

Lauren Carter.