

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.

I believe Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. However, I do not feel that it is acceptable 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.

Personally I have experienced a caesarean in a private hospital & a homebirth. With my first pregnancy I went to 43 weeks which our obstetrician was not happy about & he eventually convinced us that I was not capable of going into natural labour & an induction was necessary for our babys safety as my placenta would be calcifying & would not sustain my baby any longer. I was induced & laboured for about 12 hours. Our doctor decided I wasnt progressing fast enough so I was labeled failure to progress & wheeled off for an elective C-Section. Our daughter was delivered a beautiful pink colour, no calcification on her placenta, no other indications that she was overdue & we (my husband, daughter & I ) were left reeling, traumatized, scarred emotionally & physically & with a cascade of bonding issues, breastfeeding issues, post traumatic stress disorder etc etc

My husband & I did a lot of research & we believe that my caesarean was unnecessary & that there were numerous things that we could have done to

have prevented my having major surgery. Anything from not having an induction (babies in France & much of Europe are considered full-term at 42 weeks so inductions are not even contemplated until 44 weeks. Women throughout most of the world (apart from the USA, UK & Australia are largely left alone with no inductions looming over them for being overdue. This is because every woman is different & some womens babies are full term at 35 weeks while other womens babies are not full term until 44 weeks), to having support people who would find ways for me to get into a position that I felt comfortable in (for example, I had wanted to be on all fours during my first daughters birth which in hindsight would have been a perfect position for rocking her out of a posterior position & would have helped speed labour up but the midwives were not supportive of this) or simple being surrounded by people in whom I could completely trust & relax with could have resulted in a natural, untraumatic birth for us.

After much research including reading & hearing hundreds of birth stories from homes, hospitals, uncomplicated births & births with complications we planned the birth of our next baby at home with midwives of our own choosing. We were much more informed about labour & knew what we wanted to do & what we didnt want to do if certain emergencies arose. We found support people who had a lot of training in birth & more importantly, lots of experience with natural birth & the emergencies that can arise. Our support people knew us well, they were part of our family for over 9 months (& continue to be very close friends), they knew our birth plan & I knew that I could trust them to be honest & open with me & support me & guard my birth space so that my labour could progress in the way that it needed too.

This one-on-one support enabled me to be able to concentrate solely on myself during labour & be so at one with my baby that I knew how far along in labour I was & I could feel my baby wriggling to start contractions off & shifting into better positions as I laboured. Not only did I have 2 trained midwives with me the entire time I laboured & my husband who was not shoved aside like in hospital but was very attune with me but I also was in a position where if something went wrong with my baby or my labour I would have been the first to sense it & the first to demand that something be done about it.

I could not do this when I was labouring at hospital with my first baby. I had so many interruptions during my labour with midwives I didnt even know talking to me, lights going on & off, people I didnt know coming & going, the clock on the wall ticking down the Drs time limit for me etc etc that I could not concentrate on just me & my baby. I had no idea what position my baby was in, I had no idea what stage of labour I was in, my labour hormones were not able to work properly so I felt so much pain that I could not even begin to think of how to ease the pain with different positions etc.

Labouring at home with proper support gave me an estatic, empowering & largely painfree labour. I believe this was possible because I had midwives who knew me so well that they instinctively knew how I needed to be supported. I was comfortable enough to ask for water when I wanted, food when I wanted, physical & emotional support when needed. I was with trained people whose sole purpose was to be there to support me through my labour so I too could solely focus on my labour & so enable my labour hormones to kick in big time providing me with natural pain relief, extra

boosts of energy when needed, natural instinct as to mine & my babys progression etc etc

Our first daughter was in a deflexed posterior position in my womb & was Caesared at 43 weeks, 8lbs 3oz because our Dr said that my body had failed to progress. Our Dr told us that she could not have been born in that position because babies simply dont fit through a pelvis that way so I would have had to have a Caesear anyway or she would have died.

Our second daughter was also in a deflexed posterior position & was born at home at 43 weeks 4 days, 10lbs 12oz.

My one-on-one support had enabled me to birth a baby that the doctors told me I could not birth. A baby who was in the same supposedly unbirthable position as her sister & over 2 pounds heavier.

My hospital birth left me (& my husband) feeling traumatized, deflated, hollow, useless as a mother who couldnt even birth her own baby & heart broken that I could feel so distant to a baby that I had yearned so long for & carried inside me for many months.

My birth with one-on-one support left me feeling empowered, awesome, ecstatic & with an instant bond & connection to my baby, a baby whom I already knew from the many months we shared together while she was in my womb.

I cannot choose to go back to the horror that my first daughter & I went through & it is incomprehensible to me that my daughters might have no other choice than that. I want them to be able to choose who supports them through the life changing experience of bringing forth a new life. I, only too vividly, know the priceless value of having someone in my birth space whom I know & trust. My midwives turned birth for me from an experience of pain, horror & anguish into an experience of peace, joy & unfathomable happiness.

PLEASE do not take this away from me. Please do not take this away from my daughters. Please give all women the right to choose who will support us in the most important & life changing experience of our lives, birthing our children.

Yours sincerely

Angie Christoff