

Dear Senator Moore

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

I am shocked by the bills mentioned above which will effectively legalize homebirths by refusing the professional indemnity insurance of midwives in private practice, thereby preventing them from obtaining professional registration. Women have the basic right to make their own choices around where and with whom they give birth. To deny women the right to choose is outrageous.

I have two beautiful children, both born in the safe peaceful environment of our home. My first birth was attended by a fully qualified and professional homebirth midwife. For the birth of my second child we were unable to find a suitable midwife to attend us at home as there were so few available and our previous midwife was overseas. I understand that the lack of homebirth midwives is due to their inability to get indemnity insurance, midwives who would otherwise choose to attend homebirths are too afraid to do so.

Because I feel extremely uncomfortable and unsafe in hospitals, mainly due to the lack of recognition of a woman's right to self determine the way in which she labors and births, and due to the ever increasing rates of intervention and, in particular, caesarian sections in Australian hospitals, I chose to birth my second child at home without a midwife. This was a very difficult decision for me to make and I was forced to birth unsupported due to the current state of legislation.

If the proposed bills are passed as is and midwives are required by law to be nationally registered and require insurance to do so (homebirth midwives are unable to secure indemnity insurance at this time) there will be no homebirth midwives available to attend those women who choose to birth at home. I have no doubt that other women in my position, who feel strongly about birthing at home and are unable to find a midwife to support them will choose as I did to birth unaided. The inequity of not funding and indemnifying private homebirth is a real concern. I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same

insurance protection. It is the government's responsibility to ensure the services of a qualified health professional are available to all women including those who choose to birth at home.

What I want to see happen is:

- 1) Make changes to the draft legislation on the National Registration of Health Professionals, allowing midwives to provide care at home without insurance until insurance can be secured.
- 2) Ensure that birth at home is included in the Government's plans to provide midwives with Medicare, indemnity and access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This would require insurance covering homebirth to be sourced.

WOMEN MUST BE ABLE TO CHOOSE WHERE AND WITH WHOM THEY GIVE BIRTH.

Regards
Chantel Yates