

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 have personally home birthed two beautiful, healthy children.

This was a fully educated decision on my behalf.

The first of my homebirths was supported by a government funded midwifery program in Western Australia and was the most professional, nurturing, well supported and caring experience I could have asked for.

My second homebirth was supported by a private midwife in Sydney and was again facilitated by an incredibly dedicated, committed and amazingly experienced professional.

I believe the success of my birthing experiences were a result of my being able to stay within the comfort and safety of my own home, while feeling fully supported by the professionalism and detail to care provided by my personal home birthing midwives.

I understand this is not always the experience of women who choose to homebirth however, I believe birthing is a uniquely personal journey that each woman chooses to take and I believe each woman has a right to be fully supported and facilitated in the best possible way in her choices around this journey.

While I can appreciate health care professionals and politicians making health care decisions may believe they have the best interests of women at heart, I believe ultimately the protocol and procedures surrounding a woman's choice to birthing is hers and hers alone to make and every woman has the right to be supported in her birthing choices.

I support and encourage a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding, the same insurance protection and the same rights to the birthing options of their choice.

Excluding the facilitation of home birthing from the above mentioned bill denies women their rights.

I trust you will reconsider the exclusion of home birthing in the above mentioned bill and expand it to include all choices in birthing.

Yours sincerely,

Shahrin Leontarou