

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 had a homebirth 7 weeks ago and have had both my children under the expert, careful, and extremely compassionate care of an independent midwife. There are countless studies that point to the immense benefits of having continuity of care in the pre and postnatal periods, and I can personally vouch for the incredible level of care given by a midwife who regularly visits a woman from the time she's 12 weeks pregnant through to 6-8 weeks postpartum. In my first pregnancy I eventually birthed in a hospital as my babe was almost a month overdue. In those final weeks my midwife visited almost daily and advocated for me at the hospital. With her unwavering support I birthed a ten pound baby boy in 11 hours with no drugs and no tears, grazes or other interventions. We left the hospital hours after and had intensive daily car and support with breastfeeding over the next few weeks.

I birthed my recent bub in my living room in a birth pool, under the loving and watchful eye of two highly experienced midwives. Again, their care was constant and responsible throughout. With their assistance I worked through a very intense labour, to birth my son in just under six hours. We were at home in bed where we belonged and a hospital bed was kept vacant for someone who actually needed it.

Yours sincerely

Kimba Griffith