

Dear Senator Moore

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

I am writing 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. However it is not 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.

When I fell pregnant with my first baby, being of a mainstream mind and having private health insurance, I booked myself in to see a private obstetrician. Worst mistake of my life!!! I underwent an unnecessary cesarean and am still, almost three years later, traumatised by it. I have since had another cesarean with my second child due to placental problems which are a common side effect of a previous cesarean. I DID NOT at any time give informed consent for the first cesarean. In fact I was told nothing about the procedure before, during or after the cesarean. When I hesitated about having the cesarean whilst being stuck on a bed on my back with an electronic foetal monitor strapped to around my abdomen, that obstetrician walked over to my husband and proceeded to scare the life out of him saying that in the event we did not agree both myself and my baby would die. Well my baby had Apgars of 9 at birth and 5 minutes later, so the threat of imminent death was somewhat overstated. I am pregnant once again and have chosen to birth my baby at home this time. This is the only way that I will be able to birth in my own time and my own way. In the event that I presented to hospital, I would need to fight the hospital system every step of the way in order to achieve this. I would have to fight against being strapped to a monitor continuously, thereby not allowing me to move from the bed, I would have to fight not to have an IV line inserted and would be treated as an incredibly high risk labour. I would also be subject to time limits. In the event that I did not dilate an appropriate amount within an appropriate time I would have to have another cesarean, even if both myself and baby were doing fine. Hardly a conducive environment for labour is it? So I have done my research and have concluded that home birth is the only way for me to go. I hate to think that other women that are in my position will be unable to access the service that homebirth midwives offer. I believe it is incredibly wrong to take this option from us. I cannot see how you can say a midwife practising in a hospital environment can access all the benefits proposed but not a midwife with the same qualifications just because she delivers babies in a home environment. This is total hypocrisy. It would be a simple matter once homebirth midwives were registered to ensure that they are up to date on all their training and new research data etc. I want birth to be about the woman giving birth and her baby. I want to see the male

medical practitioners trusting women's bodies to do what they are born to do. I want to see less interference in the birthing process with no inducing, no epidurals and no cesareans without very, very good medical evidence. I want to see obstetrical staff using fetascopes instead of the electronic foetal monitors, which research has shown to have a 95% false positive reading. This is what can be achieved in a home birth scenario without women being subject to doctor's schedules and agendas (not to mention the fact they get paid more to do a cesarean) and hospital policies.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Yours sincerely

Chelsee Richardson