

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. Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. 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. 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.

My personal stories about HomeBirth are as follows:

I have had 5 homebirths.

I have received no financial help for this. It was worth it anyway.

But I am a tax payer and it is not nice to be discriminated against.

I had 4 babies in NSW and the last in at home near Humpty Doo in the Northern Territory.

I have also been present as a helper at many births.

The midwives who have attended and in 2 cases, doctors as well, have all become family to us.

I was a nurse in the old days of hospital births with mothers to be having no rights in the say of their care.

It was compulsory to be shaved, to be given an enema and to be subject to many spectators esp in government hospitals. I can remember being yelled at by a matron because the mother gave birth without being shaved. She said the doctors didn't like having to do stitches with unclean women, (because hair is?? dirty). I saw many women treated appallingly. As I was only a student, my voice was never heard. Women always delivered babies flat on their backs, they never had perineal support and if they didn't have an episiotomy done, then they tore, usually very badly.

The babies were also treated badly, withheld from the mothers for up to a day after birth, given complementary feeds of cows milk or sugared water, scrubbed with soapy chemicals and drops in their eyes as they had passed through an unclean woman. The list goes on. I also witnessed a baby dropped by an exhausted nurse. I believe the mother was never told. I resent the scare tactics used in the medical profession, ie: no birth is normal except in retrospect.

Mothers go into labour full of fear. I have wished a few mothers to be, a happy birth and they think Im mad.

I hope the hospitals have changed and that mothers are now supported.

I do know of many women who have got bugs from the hospital that have been resistant to antibiotics. MRSA (I think that is the abbreviation) is on the increase. I can remember Golden Staph going through hospital nurserys and all the babies got infected. This doesn't happen at home.

I knew about homebirth as I had listened to my grandmothers, no nonsense: midwife comes, baby comes and back to the normal life. I knew I wanted that. None of this getting permission to touch my baby, etc. I read a book about gentle birth in water and the look on the baby's face as he opened his eyes and joined the family he had been part of for 9 months already, was just beautiful. I knew that was for me. My husband and I only told a few relatives of our plans, but you would have thought we were planning murder.

The midwives were so professional, they insisted on regular anti-natal checks, at least a couple of doctor's visits to check for any other problems, a safe place to give birth with access to water and phone. We were told to join an Ambulance fund and to make sure our car worked. Phone also had to be connected.

At the time of the birth, the midwife turned up with oxygen, a full delivery kit which was sterilized and sealed and she had access to suction if needed. The doctor was notified that labour was happening and he dropped in for a cuppa. The baby was born before he came back for his second cuppa.

This was pretty much what happened for all the other births as well. They just got faster, number 2 took 35 minutes, number 3 was 25 minutes, number 4 was 20 minutes. Remember, no inductions here, just the female body doing its job.

Number 5 in Humpty Doo, was born in a pool of warm water. Lovely relaxing birth. His sister cut his cord with his godmother. Family, its what its all about.

We need to support Homebirth Midwives as my daughters and my sons future wives may want this opportunity of birthing at home. Its where familys are made.

Yours sincerely

Lee Payne