

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 am the proud mother of 5 wonderful little people. I am also pregnant with my 6th child. My husband and I have been on a very hard, long and sometimes painful journey from our first child born almost 10 years ago.

Our first birth was a huge shock to our lives, and our baby. We went private, with a private Obstetrician. We were told this was the best care. This was not correct. I was young, fit healthy, as was my husband.

I did not know that Obstetricians were surgeons, trained for the rare chance of complications in birth that require their assistance.

I was left traumatized from this birth. Something I had never felt before in my life. I suffered PND and PTSD. Only my husband supported me through this. Others told me to get over it and concentrate on my healthy baby, and that I was alive and that's what mattered. How we give birth and how we are treated in birth DOES matter. Every baby deserves a healthy mother.

My 2nd and 3rd births I went through a Birth Centre, cared for by midwives. The care cannot be compared to. They were trained and were supported of normal births. Midwives after all, are the experts in normal birth. The majority of women need only the care of a midwife, or midwife team. If the midwife picks up something that is not the norm THEN a referral for an Obstetrician is needed.

My 3rd birth was exceptionally wonderful. The midwife supported me through a strong, hard labour. She has already been on the journey with me for 8 months, and now here she was by my side for my entire labour. This is the kind of care and support all women should be able to choose.

She knew my fears, she talked with me for hours about my past births, what I needed and wanted in this labour and birth. She understood that birth is about the mother as well as the baby, their physical and emotional well being are very important.

My 4th and 5th children were born at home. THIS is what birth can be! Free to walk around my own house, free to eat and drink when and where I want. Free to shower or hop in the bath. Free to be as loud or quiet as I want. Free to do what I wanted, without the chance of staff coming in, interrupting me, taking me out of my birth space. I was in control. My support team was there for me and my baby. They were there to make my job easier. Unlike in hospital when many women are told what to do, how and when, not for them, but for the ease for the staff.

Independent Midwives have been practicing for over 8 years now without insurance. They have been supporting women who want to be at home and have the continuity of care of an Independent Midwife. A midwife who follows the mother. A midwife who supports the mother.

I want the choice to have an Independent Midwife for myself, for my friends, family, and most importantly for my daughters, children and future generations.

To take this choice away from us is to take away our birth rights, our body rights. We are the ones who give birth. We are the ones who know our bodies better than anyone.

We are the ones who have to live what happens to us every single day. The Obstetricians, politicians, hospital staff are not. We are mere numbers to them. We go in, birth, we go out.

Independent Midwives are there for more than our pregnancy, labour, birth and afterwards. They become a part of our journey. They do this job because they love it. They want to be a part of a women's journey. They want to support the mother.

Just as I was supported in my private birth and my public births, so too should I be supported in my births at home. I want the choice to have an Independent Midwife. ALL women should have that choice.

This IS a basic human right. To support every women in the birth she needs and wants, with those who she wants with her. There has in the past, is now, and will be in the future, women who choose to birth at home, no matter what others try to force on them.

Yours sincerely

Clare Morrissey