

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.

Our family story is one of homebirth with the guidance and skill of an independent midwife. I believe the way our son was birthed, one year ago, has created the foundation for our family and his life and I don't think we can underestimate the power of this most profound experience as our son develops. All parents would agree, there is no other time in life as profound as the birth of our children and we should protect this experience with all our might and not allow it to be dictated by fear. We have over medicalised birth to the point of paranoia, our culture now fears it and thinks its a medical problem to be solved, this could not be further from the truth and our experience is a clear example of why we need to protect homebirth and its practitioners from losing these profound skills. I ask you to consider carefully the implications to our society if we take away a family's right to choose how they bring their children into the world. Please look at the comparable safety statistics of homebirth vs. the hospital option and please look at our societies serge towards caesareans as a quick fix option to birth. There is much evidence that caesareans are a growing trend and that the procedure has implication to the future physical and emotional health of the child.

Compare this to our homebirth experience, which was calm and relaxed, where our midwife along with our birth team worked together in supporting my partner and our son. Birthing at home allowed my partner to feel safe and relaxed, without having the pressure of a hospitals time requirements hanging over her. Jai (our son) came into the world surrounded by love, familiar sounds and the warmth of our family home. This truly precious and unique experience, the beginning of our family, could only have happened the way it did with the sensitivity and skill given to us by our midwife and birth team and for that we will be forever grateful.

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.

Please think with your heart when making your decisions as your decisions will change forever the culture of birth in this country.

Yours sincerely,

Brett Brogan