

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 only think that it is fair that all women have the right to choose how they would like to give birth to their children whether it be by non-emergency c-section or a natural birth in hospital or at home. I was fortunate enough to give birth to my son at the Birthing Centre (midwife led care and delivery) which is part of the Royal Women's Hospital in Brisbane. This was the most ideal experience for me and I birthed my son in the way that I wanted to and was supported to do this by my midwives. This will be my first choice hands down when my partner and I conceive our next child. However, because of the demand on the Birthing Centre option (which should speak loud and clear), acceptance is initially via a ballot system. Failing the ballot system, homebirth is the only other option for us.

If other countries, including our neighbouring county New Zealand can fund midwifery care for homebirths, why can't we? Surely we aren't that close minded and backward a nation. This issue simply comes down to allowing women and their families a fair choice to all the possible options, when it comes to one of the most important events in our lives.

Yours sincerely

Nina Bugala

