

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.

Last October, I gave birth to my daughter Anais Anastasiou at home supported by Joy Johnston, a registered independent homebirth midwife. Joy was my only care provider throughout my pregnancy. One on one appointments with her in both my home and hers helped me build a comfortable relationship with her. A relationship that provided me with the strength and ability to confidently and easily birth Anais at home. Her continued support and after care saw me establish a good breast feeding relationship with my daughter that is still flourishing 9 months later, unlike with my first child. By birthing at home, I saved a bed for someone else in hospital more needy of it than myself. Homebirth is a safe and viable option for women. It results in less intervention during birth, helping mothers and babies to bond and establish breast feeding. It means unnecessary money is not spent on someone staying in hospital when they are not sick.

I am truly astounded that independent midwives are not able to access public indemnity insurance and will soon be deregistered because of this, effectively removing homebirth as a choice for birthing women of Australia.

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

Yours truly,

Mahlani Anastasiou