

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 have first hand experience of the extremely successful system in the UK through the birth of my first child in London. My midwife and I had full back up support from my wonderful local hospital and therefore had access to the latest technology, testing and information. This enabled me to be fully informed of any risk factors which may have affected my choice to give birth at home. I was very lucky to be able to have a natural birth at home, fully funded by the NHS.

My second child was born at home here in Melbourne, 1 year ago. The situation was wholly different. It was made extremely difficult for me to navigate my way through the medical system here. GPs wouldn't touch me as I was with a private midwife, the local hospital wouldn't offer me any additional tests as I wasn't registered with them for my birth (and wasn't able to be as my intention was to give birth at home). I was left with the feeling that, if it weren't for the knowledge I gained from my first birth and my determination to be tested for any possible risk factors, I would have been forced into an unsafe, un-informed situation. Despite all this, I

gave birth to my healthy son at home, wonderfully supported by my very experienced midwife (at great financial cost) and am extremely grateful that

I had the opportunity to give birth in the way that was right for me.

This

was not a political decision for me and I am not a risk taker. I simply did

not need to give birth in a hospital. I believe that with a fully supported,

community midwife led model, many more low risk women will be able to make

better choices when it comes to where and how they give birth.

I urge you strongly to restructure the above bills to enable home birth to

be a legal option for the women of Australia.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Kemp