

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 but I find it is unacceptable 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 have personally experienced how very different birthing can be with my own two daughters. One was born in hospital and the other at home. Although my reasons for choosing to birth in each of these environments was personal, I fear that others may not be so fortunate as to have that CHOICE. This is what has prompted me to submit this letter.

The midwives who supported me in each of my birthing circumstance were fantastic and very professional. But I would have to say that giving birth to my daughter at home was truly magical. It was an unforgettable experience and something that I speak openly about.

Unfortunately many women simply do not know that it is an option available... and this cannot change while homebirth midwives are struggling

for support. There are many studies that show those who choose to birth at home with a professional midwife experience a more relaxed birth and have fewer complications - I have found this to be also true anecdotally. If nurtured, this could translate into huge cost savings for our medical system. But to educate women and give them that choice, homebirth midwives need the support of government, support from medical practitioners, and support through professional indemnity to continue to provide this valuable service.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection. I ask that you consider this important enough to do the same.

Yours sincerely

Trudy Murray