

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.

My first child arrived via caesarean and our second child was born at home. The difference between the two for me personally has been life changing. The thought of me, my wife and our children in the future having no choice but to go to hospital in the future makes me shake my head in disbelief.

When my wife had passed the 'due date' of my first child we were convinced by our doctor that our baby's life was in danger because the placenta will be calcifying and the cord will stop pulsing. So we reluctantly agreed to an induction. For 12 hrs my wife laboured through numerous midwife shifts, none of whom we knew at all and none of whom listened to a word we said. Because my wife's mind was constantly occupied with trying to cope with her environment and her concerns the stress caused her contractions to become extremely painful. My wife was labelled a failure to progress and was in no uncertain terms informed that it was impossible for her to birth vaginally and must have an 'elective c-section' or the baby will die.

Due to my wife having major surgery, she had numerous difficulties breastfeeding and bonding with her child, that continued to be an issue for the entire infancy of our child. The whole experience left my wife feeling like a failure and left me feeling frustrated and stranded. Afterwards we were informed that it was just as well my wife had a c-section because the baby was deflexed posterior which is impossible to birth vaginally.

At our homebirth we had two well trained very experienced midwives who we got to know even before our baby was conceived. By the time of the birth they knew intimately what we wanted without having to be told and were fully committed to providing us only the support we needed and nothing more. This knowledge enabled my wife to relax and birth calmly and relatively pain free with absolutely no intervention needed. I was not only a witness but a participant and was able to experience the birth in

a warm, close and intimate way. After the birth we were visited often by our midwives even though there was really no need. My wife and our second child bonded beautifully, with no problems breastfeeding or sleeping.

What I think is the most significant difference though is that our second child was born deflexed posterior, the exact same position that our first child was in. My wife not only birthed a supposedly impossible position but our second child was 10lbs 12oz, a whole 2 pounds heavier than our first child who was 8lbs 3oz.

I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that the crucial almost exclusively determining factor for this difference, came down to the work and support of our one-on-one independent midwives and the freedom they created for my wife to birth in an environment that allowed my wife to birth beautifully.

Please do all you can to prevent this choice being taken away. Birth is one of the most defining and significant events in a woman's life. What possible reason is there for women to not be allowed such a vital choice on something so important? I am certain that if laws were proposed that took away a mothers choice of hospital or doctor that it would not pass quietly. All would be opposed to such a fundamental right of women. Why should it be any smaller an issue for the choice of an independent midwife, just because those who want that choice are smaller in number?

I personally ask that you reply to me on this issue and explain to me what you are going to do to prevent this loss from occurring.

Yours sincerely

Dale Christoff