

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 would like to add a little of my own experience, to explain my genuine concern for the loss of Homebirth.

The importance to save homebirth is deeply personal to me, having birthed 3 of my 4 children at home, in 2000, 2001 (after the loss of Indemnity Insurance) and 2004. We came to the decision of having an Independent Midwife care for us and to birth at home after experiencing the hospital system with our first child. Whilst we had a positive outcome, the journey itself was lacking greatly.

With our Midwife, we were treated respectfully, honestly and at all times were kept informed about the health of myself and our babies. There is not one single thing I could fault with our care, from the point of physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. It was everything I needed to safely birth my babies.

My heart breaks to think that other parents, even my own children, will be denied the opportunity to birth their babies at home if they so choose to. This choice that can be denied of them will come about, not because of dangerous practice, but what I fear is a prejudice against home birthing families and their Midwives.

Many will argue that alternative birthing services provided by our public hospitals, including limited options to birth at home, will meet the needs of independent homebirth families. I strongly dispute this. The time given alone by our Independent Midwife for pre and post natal care and labour could never be matched by the hospital system. They simply are not the same and anyone who has experienced independent homebirth and is forced to accept the hospital system would be taking second best.

I implore you to consider how important it is that true choice be kept available for birthing families of Australia. We may be but only a few,

but I believe we are just as entitled to birth where we feel safe as any other woman.

Yours sincerely

Megan Resch