

Dear Senator Moore

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills.

I am writing to voice my concern over the 3 bills. I understand that these bills cover the important issues of providing access to Medicare funding, and the Pharmaceutical Benefits scheme for women who will birth with a midwife in hospital, along with antenatal and postnatal care.

I am dismayed however to discover that they exclude homebirth. By doing this Australia is going backwards compared with countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand. These countries 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.

This proposed new legislation along with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

I believe it is in the public interest to allow highly skilled midwives to practice, and a waiver or similar exemption should be included to allow homebirth midwives to register and practice until suitable affordable insurance is available.

The other concern I have with the Bill is regarding the use of the term 'eligible' midwives used in relation to accessing Medicare, PBS and Insurance. Midwives in Australia are well trained and complete a 3 year Bachelor of Midwifery or Postgraduate diploma to register as a midwife. The international definition of a midwife includes a midwife working in any setting including the home, community, hospital, clinics, or health units.

Registration requirements will ensure that midwives are up to date with current practice and complete ongoing professional education. If restrictions and further extensive study are required for a midwife to be eligible this will severely limit the number of midwives able to provide this type of care within Australia.

The recent Maternity Services Review received approximately 900 submissions and over 400 of those mentioned the need for homebirth support. Much research supports the safety of homebirth. Why are our

voices not being heard? Women will continue to birth at home whether we legislate against it or not, families should have access to midwives who can provide skilled and competent care.

I am a mother and live in a regional area, where there was no homebirth midwife. My second child was born at home without a midwife and I transferred to hospital shortly after the birth. It means a lot to me that my child came into this world just a few centimetres from where I sit typing this and close to where he was conceived.

I want to be able to birth my next baby at home and employ an independent homebirth midwife. As a 42 year old with a previous c-section my hospital choices are limited. I am not eligible for our local birth centre. I would be happy to employ a midwife regardless of whether indemnity insurance is available to the midwife or not. We finally have a registered independent midwife supporting homebirths in my area however after July 2010 this may no longer be an option. If I was not able to access a registered homebirth midwife for my next pregnancy I would most likely still choose to birth at home unless medical complications arose, but I should not be forced into this position to birth without a midwife.

I would like a solution to be found to enable independent homebirth midwives to continue practising as registered midwives after July 2010 when national registration comes into place.

Yours faithfully

Chris Young