

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.

Although, I did not have a homebirth delivery with my first child, I did spend 12 of my 14 hours in labour with a wonderful midwife in my own home. I felt empowered, honoured and safe. My final 2 hours in hospital was not an ideal experience, with a number of factors mostly including hospital procedures getting in the way of an empowered experience. In particular, my placenta was yanked out in order for a quick stitch up so that the obstetrician could quickly attend another birth. As a result I suffered post-partum hemorrhage and still feel very angry one year on. I intend to seriously consider a homebirth for my next birth experience.

This experience has provided me with the understanding that birth is a very natural process and the environment one is in plays an enormous role in how empowered a woman feels and as a result how birthing can occur with minimal intervention.

While on a recent trip to Europe (April 2009), I read of a recent study in the UK, that found birthing at home is just as safe as birthing in a hospital and as a result government was considering strategies for increasing the ability for home birthing. Why is Australia going down the opposite track?

Please allow the freedom of choice for Australian women.

Yours sincerely

Jo Vigliaturo.