

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 am a midwife in private practice and have been for the past 25 years. My work is attending women for homebirths and prenatal education.

If the proposed Bills go through I will be unable to practice as a midwife. This will clearly affect my work, my family and the families in my area who currently contract me as midwife for the prenatal, intranatal and postnatal care for a planned homebirth.

I would buy Professional Indemnity Insurance if I could, as I have before when it was available.

The services I provide as homebirth midwife save the government lots of money, involve high levels of one to one care with all the associated benefits and create a local community that supports the women and the families long into their lives childbearing careers.

The care I provide to the women and their families in my area far exceeds what the local hospital does or can. There are three homebirth midwives in my area and together we participate in a higher than national average homebirth rate. If we can't practice in our chosen profession, if women can't have a midwife support them in their choice of homebirth, then what does this say about the decisions our government makes on our behalf? Clearly it's a removal of choice, the right to choose where and with whom a woman gives birth. This is a basic human right and if the Australian government removed this it would be such a backward step, an absurd example of what simply amounts to pressure on the government from the medical fraternity to 'abolish homebirth'.

If the government wants to implement models of care in my area that are in keeping with the midwifery one to one model, it will be unable to find the midwives within the system who are able to provide this style of care. This continuity of care can only be provided in our local area by midwives who are experienced in this, such as myself and the other two private independent midwives. Midwives who work in the hospital, work in one or other of the three phases of midwifery practice - prenatal, intranatal or postnatal care, and don't have the experience to provide the total package. If the bills are passed, continuity of care with a known midwife, the style of care gleaned the most suitable from the Maternity Service Review, will not be able to be provided in my area. This would be a very sorry situation.

Clearly the maternity services in our country are in chaos, removing homebirth won't improve the situation, it will only make more chaos. Will women choose to have homebirths without midwives? Probably, I would if I was having another baby. Will this result in mothers and babies dying unnecessarily? I hope not, but probably.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Please hear my words and act for women, not other interests, in enabling choices for maternity care that include homebirth

Yours sincerely,

Jane Hardwicke Collings