

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. As I understand, 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 within a hospital setting.

While I agree that medicare funding for midwifery care is long over due, I disagree with the current legislation that will exclude homebirth from the funding and also the private practicing midwives rights to indemnity insurance. By doing so, this will totally put us out of line with other nations that show great care and respect for the home birthing environment, and the choice it gives to women to birth in the place they best see fit for bringing their bundle of joy into the world. Other countries that we should be more closely following are New Zealand, The UK, Canada and the Netherlands. These countries choose to support the choice of women to birth within their own homes with the support of a registered midwife and they also fund it 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.

While I personally chose to birth my first 3 children in a hospital environment, If I were to have a 4th, I would certainly have considered a home birth. I live less than 5 minutes from a well respected maternity hospital, however my 3 previous pregnancies have shown NO complications, that made it necessary for me to be in a hospital environment. Many women who choose homebirth do so after doing a lot of research and finding that statistically homebirth has a much lower intervention rate, while still providing a similar safety rate to that of a hospital. Surely this shows that homebirth in low risk pregnancies is a great way for midwifery care to continue within Australia, and actually should be the way we are heading by encouraging more women to birth at home under midwifery care rather than removing women's rights to birth where they choose. As a soon to be midwifery student, I find that these legislation should they continue as suggested, will really be reverting the pregnant woman's care back to similar situations where women were drugged and strapped to beds in hospitals because this was what was easiest for the doctors to deliver their babies. It is not a a decision that supports women, their bodies or their babies!

I truly hope these bills are adjusted to allow for private practicing midwives to continue their highly valuable practice, assisting women to deliver healthy happy babies in the safety, warmth and loving environment of their own homes.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Beswick