

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 personally have had two homebirths. Both of these births were immensely fulfilling and positive experiences, leaving me with an overwhelming feeling of empowerment and joy.

I believe this was purely because of my birthing experiences being at home. I felt comfortable surrounded by my music, my smells, my food, my bed, my bathroom, my husband and my best friend. I had total control and support to satisfy any need, want or feeling. I had no feelings of pressure, or that my 'performance' was not quite right or that anyone other than myself could birth my baby.

The support, encouragement and feeling of being safe, cared for and respected by my midwives was what made bringing my children into the world, the most amazing experience of my life. I would never hesitate to thoroughly recommend homebirth to nearly all healthy prospective parents.

I am devastated to learn that these incredible birthing experiences might not be shared amongst my friends, relatives or any other women, or my own daughter, or that their rights and choice to birth naturally in their own comfortable space was not supported by our government and was no longer a choice in Australia.

I'm glad I had the choice.

Yours sincerely

Olivia Kearns