

Tuesday 14th July 2009

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.

My mother-in-law, sister-in-law and numerous friends here in Australia have safely had their babies at home, thanks to the expertise of midwives working in the home environment. I was surprised when my English friend, Jo, indicated that she was intending to have her first baby at home in the UK. This decision was based on medical advice regarding the prevalence of pathogens such as 'golden staph' which poses health risks to women and their babies in the hospital environment. Like me, Jo is a mainstream school teacher, and not a very 'alternative' character as the homebirth stereotype might suggest. She now has two children, and both were born safely at home with midwives in attendance.

I hope to have the choice of a homebirth, when the time comes for me and my husband to start our family. Including homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills preserves the important right for Australian couples to choose the safest and most appropriate environment and medical personnel to attend the birth of their children.

Thanks for your time.

Yours sincerely

Nina Taylor