

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.

After four successful natural births in a hospital I have decided to have my fifth child in the comfort of our own home. This decision has been made after frustration at a lack of support in hospital by health practitioners for what I want during my labour. I have found myself defending my decisions mid labour instead of focusing and enjoying what is a wonderful part of my life. These decisions involve my requesting no intrusive intervention during labour and no painkillers. They are decisions that have been made after much research and investigation on my part.

I will have 2 midwives at the birth of my 5th child who know me and have been involved in my pregnancy since conception. They will have our health as their number one priority. This is also something that would have been impossible for me to have under the current health system. Often, I would have two or three midwives (who didn't really know me) and various doctors. This is not conducive to a focused and relaxed labour!

I strongly urge the committee to support homebirth midwives in this bill. There is a mountain of evidence that supports the success of patient recovery, bonding and breastfeeding after homebirth.

Yours sincerely

Veronica Laffy