

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 also support a system that allows women and their families to choose how

and where they birth. I delivered my first born in the Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne in 2005. Although the midwives were very pleasant, the

following factors impacted very negatively on my birth experience:

- the lack of continuity of care due to shift change
- the huge variation in experience from midwife to midwife
- the unfamiliar environment
- listening to other birthing women scream in nearby rooms

I resolved never to birth that way, or in that environment again.

For the birth of my daughter I registered with a home-birth mid-wife (Jan Ireland) and GP (Dr Peter Lucas). Between them they have more than 50 years

experience in birthing in the home.

The experience of birth this time around was so different- in fact so wonderful that I immediately wanted to do it all again! Two midwives attended my birth- Jan Ireland and Kirsty. The key features of home birth that were so positive for me were:

- Guaranteed, consistent, useful support from 1 very experienced midwife

throughout my labor (Jan), with whom I had developed a great rapport

- The ability to relax in my home environment leading up, during and after

the birth

- The feeling that I was in charge of my body and the birth- not the hospital system or the hospital staff, or the time of day

- Support and strategies to not use drugs during labor.

· Being treated as an individual, and all members of my family being known to and supported by the birthing team.

Home birth should remain a safe, legal option for women who choose to birth in this way. Furthermore, home-birth midwives should be given the insurance and legal protection afforded to those practicing within hospitals.

Do NOT make the mistake of medicalising birth more than it already has been- western medicine has already done so much to undermine the natural ways in which women's bodies are meant to work during labor.

Yours sincerely

Penny Thompson