

Dear Senator Moore

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

I applaud Nicola Roxon for many of the recommendations of the Maternity Services Review, however, I was stunned to learn that not only would homebirth midwives not be Medicare-funded but that it will no longer be legal for them to attend homebirth.

The review stated, possibly by way of explanation, that homebirth is chosen by very few women implying that simply because it has minority-status it is invalid. Aside from the fact that homebirth is made less accessible due to its prohibitive cost a woman's right to choose her place of birth is inviolable.

Homebirth is statistically as safe as hospital birth and is viewed as a legitimate place of birth in many cultures comparable to our own. In this country homebirth midwives have been working without indemnity insurance since the 2001/2002 insurance crisis. This inconsistency has not been addressed and so the proposed requirement for insurance in order to gain registration results in an exclusion based not on a poor safety record but a quirk of administration.

I have homebirthed twice, each time with two highly trained and experienced independent midwives. My midwives have supported me not only during the birth but throughout pregnancy, labour and the postnatal period. This model of care has been the best fit for myself and my family and I have had immeasurably positive birth experiences which have resonated well into parenthood.

We cannot establish a maternity system which presumes all women want the same model of care and place of birth. This is to override the plurality of human nature.

Regardless of legislation I will continue to homebirth unless a hospital birth is medically indicated. I do not want to experience pregnancy and birth without a midwife but feel this would be the only choice consistent with my history and approach. When birthing I need the security of home where a relaxed labour is more likely to occur and with it a healthy birth and baby.

Homebirth will continue and the families who choose it must not be denied access to independent midwives.

Yours Sincerely

Elspeth Ives