

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.

This June I gave birth to my second child. I had planned a homebirth, and during my pregnancy the care I received from my private midwife was excellent and far and beyond above the quality of care I received with a private obstetrician and private hospital birth of my first child two years ago. At my last midwife appointment at 39 weeks my blood pressure was very high and my midwife recommended that I be monitored in hospital to see how it developed. It did remain high and I ended up being induced in hospital the next day with no further complications. My midwife clearly knew the limits of her skills and knew it could have developed into a more serious case that she might not have been able to handle at home. She also has a very good working relationship with the staff at our local hospital and thus they already had my records and she was able to brief them on my background so that there was little trauma at having to transfer to hospital.

I know two women from a nearby town which is just outside the area that my midwife services who were willing to have "freebirths" without a medical person present as they were so terrified of entering hospital due to previous bad experiences. I am very afraid that with the introduction of this bill as it currently stands that there will be more freebirths and hence deaths if private midwives are outlawed.

I was willing to pay almost \$5000 out of my own pocket for the services of a private midwife. This amount is cheaper than what an equivalent stay in hospital would cost, but no government funding is given to homebirths. I know Nicola Roxon says that homebirths are a tiny proportion of the births in this country, but I imagine that a great deal of this is due to the cost of privately funding \$5000.

Please help to give indemnity insurance to private homebirth midwives.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Conkas