

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 myself have recently become a mother and had to choose which type of health care to utilize for my pregnancy, birth and post-partum period. I was very interested in having a home birth as I am low risk for complications, and believe that having one on one care throughout pregnancy will reduce complications.

However, the costs associated with having a homebirth meant that i chose to give birth in hospital, faced with midwives i didn't know, i ended up having multiple drugs for analgesia followed by a complicated forceps delivery and episiotomy which i believe could have been avoided had i felt safe and relaxed during labour. As studies have shown that one on one care throughout pregnancy leads to decreased intervention and painrelief required while neonatal outcomes remain the same/similar to birth in hospital, i believe that had i been able to access private midwife care without such expense then my birth would have been

different, or I at least would have felt less vulnerable during labour (even if it was deemed i needed to go to hospital), as i would have a person who knows me, my family and my needs. private midwives also provide a significantly better post-natal follow-up than hospitals, and i feel that my breastfeeding would not have been so problematic had i recieved adequate help for the 6 weeks following birth.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Richards