

Dear Senator Moore (et al),

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 which allows consumer choice on an even playing field. Our current birthing system is far too medically dominated and there is a strong desire within the wider community for greater personal control over birth experiences. The few birthing centres and homebirth programs that are available through government institutions are in great demand and the choice of homebirth with a private practice midwife has also been becoming more and more prominent over recent years.

Please don't take our birth rights away.

My family (private practice) midwife is a beautiful, caring, gentle, giving and SKILLED woman. If this legislation proceeds unchanged she will loose her vocation - not just a job, but a passionate way of living.

I choose homebirth as a rational and informed decision, weighing up the 'risks' of being at a small distance from medical assistance if required with the risks associated with being (unnecesarily) within a hospital environment. We have two beautiful (home-born) children, and plan for more in the future. If I have to choose between birthing in a hospital or birthing at home on my own, I will choose to stay at home unless there is a reason to transfer. I am willing to take the 'risks' of an unassisted birth over the risks of a hospital setting any day. But I would really rather have my educated and loving midwife by my side.

I have heard several women saying that they are willing to bring forward their plans to have more children, so that they can birth before the July '10 deadline, but I am not willing to put myself or my family under that kind of pressure, to be manipulated in that way by a system that simply doesn't think that my choices are valid.

My choices are valid, and a government that would remove the rights of birthing women (choice of birth place and carer as a basic human right

according to the World Health Organisation) simply has no perception of the damage that could be caused by such an arrogant position.

I thank you for your time in reviewing these Bills and I am certain that the discrepancies discussed can be amended with due diligence.

Yours Sincerely,

Clodia Porteous