

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.

After a traumatic hospital birth and an elective cesarean (had in the hope of avoiding a repeat of the first birth experience) we chose a homebirth for our 3rd child. There are only 2 midwives local to us, and in the end we opted not to continue care with them. If this legislation is allowed to pass it will take away from women here in our community one of the already few options they have. Take away independent midwives and it leaves us with hospital care only. And for women like me who have been previously traumatised by hospital care, where does that leave us?

If we are to ever become pregnant again we will again birth unassisted because there will be no other choice for us. Unless there is an emergency situation, I will not return to birth at the hospital that assaulted me and left me damaged.

Birth is not just one day in our lives, it is a life changing experience and women deserve the very best care, not to be assaulted or coerced and forced into substandard care.

The homebirth of our 3rd child was one of the most incredible moments of our life. The joy, the happiness, the stark contrast to the trauma experienced in hospital. Please don't remove the experience of a joyous homebirth as an option for other women.

Yours sincerely

April Munson