

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.

MY PERSONAL STORY

IT IS UNFAIR TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST A GROUP OF WOMEN CHOOSING HOMEBIRTH JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE THE MINORITY.

BIRTH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT, SACRED EVENT OF A WOMAN'S LIFE, AND I REALISED THAT FOR MY TWO BIRTHS, THE BEST ENVIRONMENT WOULD BE AT MY OWN HOME, WITHOUT THE INTERVENTIONS OF THE MEDICALISED MODEL OF BIRTH.

I WANTED TO BIRTH IN A WARM, FAMILIAR, PRIVATE ENVIRONMENT, WHERE I COULD BE UNINHIBITED, NAKED, AND COMFORTABLE - WHERE I COULD BIRTH IN MY OWN TIME, WITH MY OWN RHYTHMS, AND THE FREEDOM TO MOVE AND SOUND AS I PLEASED, AND TO GET DOWN TO THE BUSINESS OF BIRTHING.

I BELIEVED THIS TO ENABLED ME TO CREATE AND HAVE THE BEST POSSIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES TO MAKE BOTH MY BIRTHS EASIEST FOR ME, GENTLEST FOR MY BABIES COMING INTO THIS WORLD, AND MOST SACRED FOR MY PARTNER AND I, AND THE BABIES THAT WE HAD CREATED AND BIRTHED IN OUR HOME.

OUR TWO MIDWIVES WERE EXCELLENT IN THEIR EXPERIENCE, REASSURANCE, SUPPORT, AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIRTH PROCESSES.

THEIR CARE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BIRTH, (CARE OF ME AND BABY, NURTURING, CLEANING, RESPECT OF OUR SACRED SPACE), AND THE FOLLOWING HELP WITH BREASTFEEDING, ADVICE, CARE, AND FRIENDSHIP WAS AN EXPERIENCE WE BOTH WERE SO GRATEFUL FOR, AND I KNOW THAT I WOULD NOT HAVE RECEIVED THIS LEVEL OF CARE HAD I BIRTHED LIKE THE MAJORITY, IN A HOSPITAL.

HOWEVER, WE HAD A PRICE TO PAY FOR THIS, AND IT WAS A FINANCIAL BURDEN OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS. I AM AWARE THAT A HOSPITAL BIRTH, WITHOUT ANY INTERVENTIONS, DRUGS OR SURGERY COSTS MORE THAN WHAT WE PAID IN OUR FEES. SO FOR AN OUTSTANDING AND INCOMPARABLE EXPERIENCE OF BIRTH AND ITS SEQUELAE, WE HAD TO PAY THIS PRICE.

MOST WOMEN WHO BIRTH AT HOSPITAL DO NOT HAVE TO PAY ANYTHING. EVEN PRIVATE HEALTH INSURED COUPLES ARE COVERED FOR OBSTETRICIANS OF THEIR CHOICE, AND STAY IN HOSPITAL.

THERE ARE MANY WOMEN LIKE ME AND COUPLES LIKE US WHO WOULD OPT FOR THE KIND OF SAFE, GENTLE BIRTHS AS WE HAD, BUT CANNOT AFFORD SUCH AN EXPERIENCE, AND ARE FORCED TO HAVE THE KIND OF BIRTH THEY DO NOT CHOOSE, AND TO BIRTH IN AN ENVIRONMENT THEY DO NOT WISH TO, ALL BECAUSE THIS ONE CHOICE IS NOT RECOGNISED AND SUPPORTED FINANCIALLY BY THE GOVERNMENT.

I AM AWARE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS TAKING STEPS FORWARD TO AT LEAST HAVE HEARD WHAT MANY WOMEN AND COUPLES ARE SAYING, AND THAT IS THAT WE WANT TO BIRTH AT HOME WITH THE CARE OF EXPERIENCED MIDWIVES, BUT WE NEED MORE THAN JUST BEING HEARD- WE NEED ACTION TAKEN, AND LEGISLATION PUT INTO ACTION TO ALLOW US TO HAVE THAT CHOICE, AND OUR MIDWIVES TO BE THERE WITH US!!!

I AM CONCERNED FOR MY FUTURE BIRTHS, AND THE RIGHTS OF ALL WOMEN - (ESPECIALLY THE ONES WHO LIVE TOO FAR FROM HOSPITALS, WHO WANT TO BIRTH AT HOME) -TO CHOOSE THE BIRTH ENVIRONMENT THAT BEST SUITS THEIR NEEDS, WITH CARE GIVERS THAT MAKE IT SAFE FOR THEM TO DO SO.

WE NEED OUR HOMEBIRTH MIDWIVES PROVIDED WITH THE INDEMNITY INSURANCE THAT IS GOING TO BE REQUIRED OF OUR PRIVATELY PRACTICING MIDWIVES, AND FOR THEM TO BE ALLOWED TO WORK IN PRIVATE PRACTISE, SO THAT THE COLLECTION OF US WHO CHOOSE TO, CAN BIRTH AT HOME.

WE NEED TO RECEIVE THE SAME FINANCIAL BENEFITS AS THE REST OF THE BIRTHING WOMEN AND FAMILIES.

I REALLY HOPE THAT YOU HAVE ACTUALLY READ THIS LETTER, AND REALISE THAT BIRTH IS A SIGNIFICANT EVENT, NOT AN EXPERIENCE TO BE SHOVED INTO THE SAME MOLD, AND EXPECTED OF EVERY WOMAN.

PLEASE REALISE THAT WE ALL DESERVE THE RIGHT TO FREE CHOICE, AND THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO MANIFEST THOSE CHOICES.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Zantor