

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 am both a Midwife and a homebirth mother of 4 kids. I chose continuity of care with a known midwife to attend me at home, where I could labour more easily without distraction or medical interference. I was able to have my whole family with me, including the older siblings, which created the most amazing energy and community to welcome my child into the world. It was a far cry from the environment on offer in the hospital system...I work there, I know!!

Women need to be allowed to choose their place of birth. While homebirth is not the choice of the majority, it is still a choice of many. Why is it, that any woman can freely choose to have a Caesarean for no medical reason (which is major abdominal surgery and puts both mother and baby at risk), when soon she may not be allowed to choose to homebirth, even when it has been proven that outcomes for mother and baby are far better.

Homebirth is also much more economical. Compare the cost to the health care system of a mother choosing to birth at home, as opposed to a 3 - 7 day stay in hospital, use of labour ward and staff 24 hours a day, equipment use, possible drugs, epidurals, inductions and caesareans (to name but a few of the costs).

Why would you decide to take this choice away from women? Women will still homebirth. If they can't have a midwife in attendance, they will do it alone. Mortality rates will increase!!

I ask you to consider ALL women and their freedom to choose their place of birth WITH a midwife.

Yours sincerely

Faye Read