

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 had all six of my children at home and received quality pre and post natal care superior to any doctor I attended. The psychological state of a woman has a large impact on the birth process and coping with and feeding the baby. A hospital is a place of sickness and injury and emergency, tense, rushed and overcrowded. The staff are therefore in a mindset of treating birth as a medical emergency and are pushed to speed things artificialy up due to time constraints and staffing storages. Both these factors would contribute to complications occuring. In my situation, there was a positive atmosphere of excitement with the constant information being given in the progress of the birth. Not just that, the midwife guided me on how to encourage the process of labour without drugs. Rather than being immobile and strapped to a monitor I could wander around being followed, encouraged and constantly checked with the doppler. When I had mine at home I was able to just flow into a routine that included the baby with no disruption to the family. But, for three of them I hired a cottage in Toowoomba. My children see birth as a natural process rather than a medical emergency. Sadly, some of their peers think all babies are born by ceasarian if not it being a normal way for babies to be born. There is an increasing fear of natural childbirth among our young women and dependence on interventions. What implications will this have on the next generation giving birth?

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Your name

Yours sincerely

Sonja Cover