

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 wish to be able to access as many different birth choices as possible when it comes to me giving birth for a second time. When I was pregnant with my first child I wanted to have a home birth but due to where I lived and pressures from the people surrounding me I chose a hospital birth. Whilst in hospital I had a birth which required no obstetric care and minimal midwife care. I feel if I was able to have had that birth at home with an attending homebirth midwife, my bed would have been available to a woman who genuinely needed to be in hospital. Now I am living near my family who will support my choice to birth whichever way I choose to and my only hope is that the choice is available.

Yours sincerely

Emma L. Elder