

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 gave birth to my daughter just over five years ago, at home, attended by a registered midwife. It was an incredible experience, one that is just not possible to achieve in hospital or birth center. Feeling safe and comfortable in the privacy and familiarity of my own home, supported by an experienced midwife, was integral to my ability to give birth without intervention and with such a positive flow-on effect to my ability to mother. My decision to have another child will be absolutely affected by the outcome of this legislation. I will not have another child if I am not able to choose midwifery care in my home for birth.

Yours sincerely

Alexandra Westaway