

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.

The right to choose how and where to birth is vital to the wellbeing of mothers and babies in this country. Women who desire an elective cesarean section are able to make this decision, women who wish to have particular pain relief are thankfully able to access this, but yet women who choose to birth with trained and expert caregivers in their own homes are going to be forced into hospitals or to birth without any trained professionals to assist them. Surely this cannot be considered fair?

After choosing to birth my first child in a public Birth Centre, my family and I strongly wish to birth our future children at home. Whilst the birth of our son was a natural and magical experience, there were times throughout my labour and after his birth where I was treated in a manner that I feel was unacceptable and that could easily have been avoided had I given birth in a familiar environment with a familiar midwife.

My husband and I have discussed the future of homebirth in Australia. We feel so passionate about our right to birth our children in an environment that we see suitable that, if legislation passes that prohibits us from choosing homebirth, we will be forced to leave Australia in search of a more forward thinking and accepting society.

Yours sincerely,

Bella Munro