

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 introduction of this Bill will affect me at a very personal level, as I am training to become a midwife and I myself am pregnant. I am currently in my final year of study and intend to practice independently in a homebirth context. I am also planning a homebirth for my first baby in September this year, under the expert care of an independent midwife, and I am doing so because I believe in the intrinsic physical and psychological safety of doing so. Effectively making homebirth illegal will prevent me from entering the profession I am training for, as well as removing my right as a woman and mother to choose where I birth my babies.

I ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

Yours sincerely

Rosanna Hunt