

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.

My husband and myself gave birth to our first daughter in August 2008. This was done naturally, with two midwives at home. The experience for us was wonderful and the choice was personal. To think that other women or myself in the future may not have the same choice both saddens and angers me. I do not wish nor want to have my baby in a hospital. I understand and respect other women's choices to give birth in a hospital, but for me (as long as I and the baby are healthy) do not make the same choice. As tax paying citizens we should have the OPTION to choose where we would like to birth and not be forced to attend a hospital.

Sincerely,

Karen Tham