

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 feel strongly that my daughters have benefited greatly from being born at home. I believe that the opportunity to be born at home has set my children up for a more wholistic experience of life due to the fact that there was minimal drug intervention and I feel strongly that this is not available to most women who birth through the hospital system. My reasons for saying this are that in the heat of the moment, decisions can be made that go against the wishes of the couple as they have, in some cases, an altered state of judgement. The care provided by our private midwife was thorough and well planned.

I feel that all men and women should be given the chance to experience what we would call our wholistic birthing experience, which in turn gives us, and anyone else in my opinion, the confidence to make effective decisions about raising children. Due to the positive experience of our homebirth, our minds remain open to health benefits of the main stream health system (which we are fortunate to have in Australia) as well as the more traditional ways.

Yours sincerely

Joshua Furness