

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 second child, Ziggy Barrett, turned one two weeks ago. He was delivered at home with the help of two experienced midwives. I strongly urge the senate committee to support the right of women to choose where they can give birth. Homebirths are not for everyone and in some cases they may not be appropriate. However, to effectively ban homebirths by not allowing funding to support indemnity for midwives is a blight on our community's commitment to support freedom of choice - and, ultimately parents' rights. I strongly urge the committee to consider these points and support freedom of choice by allocating funding to homebirths.

Yours sincerely,  
Peter Barrett