

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.

Here in the Hunter New England Health Area I was fortunate to plan a homebirth for my first child through the funded program at Belmont Birth Centre. Initially I had sort the service of a private midwife for a homebirth until in Jan 2008 the publicly funded program was offered through the Birth Centre. My sister who lives in the Riverina Area was also wanting this option of homebirth for her first birth but unfortunately the only option she had was GP led care at the Base hospital. All women whatever the geographical location should have access to all choices for birth including homebirth with midwives. Let's keep up with the rest of the world and support our women where ever and with whom they choose to birth.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Prest