

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.

The birth of my first child was via caesarean section in a private hospital. My second birth was with an independent midwife. I planned to birth at home, but ended up birthing in a public hospital with my midwife present. I am so grateful for her care and expertise in guiding me through this life-changing experience. I believe that without her trust and my own in my ability to birth naturally, I would have been put in the medical system as a high-risk birth and one that was almost inevitably going to end in another caesarean. Thank God for my midwife. It saddens me that this choice may not be available to all mothers in the future.

Yours sincerely

Karen Gaskill