

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 have birthed 3 of my 5 children at home. It saddens me greatly to think that Independent midwives will no longer be able to practise due to insurance issues. In my experience independent midwives do a marvellous job in supporting women and their partners through the childbirth experience. They should be encouraged in their field and given more respect. There are families out there that simply DO NOT want to have their birth experiences in a hospital. My husband and I were one of these couples. For our 3rd child we could not find a midwife in our area who would come to our homebirth. So we went ahead and did it with family and a friend - without the aid of a midwife. This is not my preferred option. I would much rather a qualified midwife with us, for obvious reasons.

Home birth for families of low risk pregnancies are a safe option and should not be looked down upon, please stand up for those of us who wish to birth at home and include Independent Midwives into the Bill.

Yours sincerely

Karla Pope