

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 it is my right to give birth in the environment of my choice and creation. If the pregnancy is uncomplicated I can see no reason why a woman shouldn't give birth at home with an experienced midwife who she trusts and has a developed friendship with. Being in a home environment reduces stress and anxiety so much, it prevents complications that might occur if a woman is in a strange and unfamiliar place. A woman's first birthing experience can be completely empowering and beautiful and profound if she feels that she has some control and is surrounded by people she knows and trusts in a space she is comfortable. I hope to have a homebirth when I have my second child one day, it would be very sad indeed for me not to have my choice supported by our government.

Yours sincerely

Isobel Harper