

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 many friends that have experienced homebirth, they have each had profound and empowering experiences. They speak of the strong relationship they formed with their midwife/ birthing attendant. This, and the gentleness and comfortable space of birthing in their own home brought to the birthing process.

My sister has been a birthing attendant for more than 10 years, she has worked along highly trained, independent, private midwives.

Her reflections on her countless births she has supported over the years have been positive and inspiring.

On a personal note, this issue affects me as I am passionate about birthing my children at home in the future. I see this as my right as a human being and I do not want this right taken away from me,

Yours sincerely

Penelope Arvanitakis