

Dear Senator Moore,

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills - ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

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 UK 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.

As an economist by profession, I am concerned about the economic costs of this unintended consequence. I can only explain this economic nonsense with the tendency to treat pregnancy and giving birth as an 'illness' that needs to be 'treated' in hospital. But in so doing the legislation is taking away the opportunity to provide optimal care for those women and their families, who have no complications and can and want to give birth at home, at a fraction of the overall cost to society of a hospital birth.

In the perspective of society as a whole, such legislation amounts to an irresponsible squandering of scarce health resources in the interest of a one size fits all solution, which benefits at best the medical profession, but takes the choice away from the women and families concerned.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Yours sincerely

Ingrid Schraner