

Dear Senator Moore

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

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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.

As a home birth midwife in NZ, I feel it vital to contribute to this important issue. Women have chosen to home birth for decades, nay centuries. What helps keep home birth safe is trained, registered practitioners available to support women in their chosen environment. Outlawing midwifery for home birth will not stop women birthing at home. It may stop them having a midwife with them which is likely to lead to an increase in poor outcomes.

The research is very clear that home birth is a safe and cost effective option for low risk women. This research however is done in the context of home birth with a trained professional and access to transfer into support services if required.

Sending the home birth movement underground will see some mother's and babies 6 feet underground unnecessarily.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Botica