

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.

It is the right of all mothers to choose how and where their children are born - particularly if they already have experience in childbirth, and there are no known complications. Home birthing is a human right that has existed since the beginning of time, and there is wisdom and benefits in a home birth that some consider more important than a sterilised and controlled environment. As human beings we should be able to have a choice, as alternatives offer increased information and vital experience and skills - which can benefit all everyone. It is insulting to think that certain institutions and individuals presume to have the right to control and limit a person's experience and choice.

A majority of the mothers I know have chosen to have home births, and I have only heard positive experiences. Indeed, this is a choice that I have made for when I have my own children. By keeping making it illegal, it will force an underground movement that will be less safe and supportive. It will not stop the strong belief that home birthing is a more human and natural option, and will not stop women giving birth outside of institutions.

Please support the health and choice of all women.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Tinworth