

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.

As a family we want the right to hire an independent midwife who is not tied to a hospital scheme and who can help us make decisions on the most appropriate maternity care for our family without the constraints of hospital policy. After two traumatic hospital births I want to have more children but would never birth in hospital again where I was subjected to unnecessary interventions in a cold and uncaring environment. I would however be excluded from hospital based homebirth programs because of their strict inclusion criteria. I believe I should have the right to make decisions about the most appropriate maternity care for me in discussion with my independent midwife. If I am unable to hire an independent midwife after this legislation is passed I will be forced to birth at home unattended which would not be my first choice.

Yours sincerely

Merrie Caruana & Rajiv Gohil