

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 am the proud grandmother of two beautiful grandchildren, the youngest being three months old. They were both serenely and safely born at home, with two highly experienced private practice midwives present.

It would be extremely discriminatory for homebirth to be excluded from the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioner) and related Bills.

Australia is not a third world country. It is a country where Australian women are well educated, well nourished and very healthy. Do not deny Australian women the choice of homebirth. It is imperative that Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support be available to ALL midwives whether in hospital or in private practice.

Yours Sincerely,

Manuela Rechsteiner.