

Dear Senator Moore

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

I am writing 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. However it is not acceptable 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.

As a grandmother, I was so proud to see my two daughters give birth last year to two healthy children in their homes. They both hired the support of two registered independant homebirth midwives. Juanita was born safely and easily at home in Queensland and Anais was born at home in Melbourne. My daughters were completely supported and the continuity of care they received was of a very high standard. I have no dout in my mind that my daughters ability to have an intervention and drug free birth was due to their ability to hire the services of independant homebirth midwives with whom they were completely comfortable with and the ability to stay in there home environment. My two granddaughters are healthy and flourishing, I am very proud that my daughters received such a high standard of care and I encourage my neices and other relatives to choose homebirth. It concerns me deeply that my family will no longer be able to hire an independant midwife should they not gain indemnity insurance by July 2010. I find this completely unexceptable and deplorable, that a women's right to choose who attends her birth will be vastly deminished due to the inability for homebirth midwives to be covered by an indemnity scheme. I am not only concerned for my daughters but for the many other Australian women who choose to birth at home with an independant midwife and for future generations.

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

Yours sincerely

Valerie Fitzparick