

Dear Senator Moore

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

I gave birth to my 3 daughters (aged 6, 3 and 1) at home and this would not have been possible without my midwives in Private Practice. I made the choice to birth at home as my mother had died from cancer 3 years before I conceived my first child. I see hospitals as a wonderful place to be if you are sick or wounded.

Pregnancy and birth are not an illness. By outlawing homebirth practice you take away valid choices for women and a chance to birth naturally without intervention. Please don't try and tell me that giving birth in hospital is a natural and safe experience. My Dutch grandmother gave birth to her 6 children at home and I want my 3 daughters to be able to at least have the choice!

Therefore 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.

Yours sincerely

Megan Benne