

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 woman who gave birth at home, I want other pregnant women to have the same opportunities that I did. I was supported throughout my pregnancy and my birth experience by my midwife. She helped me, educated me, and assisted in giving me a beautiful baby girl. I could not have done it without her.

I also could not have had the same experience in a hospital. Pregnancy and birth are natural phenomena - birth does not have to occur only within the confines of a medical facility. There are certainly good reasons why some births need to, and why some women may chose to. However, do not exclude from these bills women who want to give birth in their homes, surrounded by their families, and looked after by a trained midwife.

Please make sure that these bills provide access to homebirths for future mothers and their families.

Yours sincerely

Kristina Cunningham