

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 myself have had two homebirths (at my expense) with continuity of care from some excellent independent midwives. The first birth was challenging, and I believe it was the encouragement from the midwife, and lack of pressure from the hospital system, that allowed me to journey through and birth naturally with no intervention. The second birth was a breeze, and almost ecstatic, I felt so relaxed in my home environment and didn't need to travel in the middle of labor. Both my children have received this gentle entry into the world. I believe homebirth is a safe and nurturing option for low-risk women, and that women have a right to choose it. Please don't make it dangerous and illegal.

Yours sincerely

Ms. Kali Foster