

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 but not for midwives working in private home birth practice. This is unacceptable.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue but to exclude home birth from this funding and indemnity arrangement is a violation of a woman's right to make her own informed birth choices. 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 home birth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose home birth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent home birth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include home birth 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.

Both of my sons were born safely at home. I was attended by capable and knowledgeable independent midwives each time. Each time it was a beautiful experience that I will treasure forever. There were no unnecessary monitors, no arbitrary time limits and no staff changes. I felt supported and free to allow nature to take its course. Considering my health and the normalcy of my pregnancies, I feel that the risks of unnecessary interventions at the hospital outweigh the risks of birthing my children safely at home. I have done my research and, thus, made my own informed choice. That it is a choice of only a minority of women does not make it any less a valid and evidence based choice. All women should have the right and freedom to choose where and with whom they will give birth as I have done. If this legislation goes through, I fear more women will feel forced to birth at home without any capable support and, thus, creating dangerous situations. A woman should never feel forced to birth anywhere ... she has the right to choose what is right for her, her baby and her family based on current, accurate and up to date information. Please do not take this right away from us.

Yours sincerely

Kareena Vicari Hoy Poy