

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 wish to share with you my own situation. I am presently pregnant with my 4th child. I have had 3 previous natural births without any medical intervention. I am a fit and health woman who does not smoke, drink alcohol or take any other drug. I am unfortunately 33 years of age which classes me as a high risk patient in the hospitals maternity section and because of this I can birth only at Wollongong or Campbelltown Hospitals; both more than an hour from my home along windy, bumpy country roads. My last two birthing experiences have occurred in under 1 hour. I feel as though home birthing is the only option I will consider. Travelling during labour, if managed at all, is an exhausting and dangerous situation and I refuse to put my unborn child and myself at such risk. I wonder, not only why I am unsupported by our Government with funding and insurance, but also why home birthing is not celebrated as an intelligent and well informed choice for families to make. Birthing at home allows a woman to remain connected with her family, her true support network at such a vulnerable time, while being assisted by an experienced midwife. Other children and family members are often present at the birth allowing for a deep bonding experience for the entire family. This allows

for new little Australians to be born into strong and supportive families.

Why is this being denied to so many?

Yours sincerely

Deborah Southwood