

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.

Having had the opportunity to receive the care and support of an experienced midwife in the birth of one of my children at home I feel compelled to add my voice to this discussion. For women of the future to not be allowed this choice seems to me to be a terribly retrograde step for a dynamic country like ours to be taking. Midwives have been working safely and effectively in the community, empowering women and supporting families in their pro-active choices around birth for a long time. They, and the families making such choices, must be supported in turn by government legislation.

I urge you as a woman and member of our government to do what is right and necessary to ensure that homebirth midwives can continue to operate independently and effectively in the community for all women of the future.

Yours sincerely

Kate Tenni