

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 have friends in the UK and Netherlands who have been offered home birth funded by their local health Authority. While I realise that this is a long way off in Australia, it would be nice to have the option to continue the practice of birthing at home privately, without asking a health care professional to effectively break the law. Choice is a very important factor in labour and birth and by removing the choice you are removing the chance for many families to enjoy the beauty of childbirth in their own homes. Pregnancy and birth are natural and do not need to be treated in hospital, let the people who want to birth naturally in their own homes do so.

Thank you for your time,

Yours sincerely

Elaine Morgan