

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 had four children since 1997, the first and second in Family Birth Centres, and the others at a public hospital, because the Family Birth Centre closed down. I was very disappointed that it closed; my births at the hospital were a less positive experience. It is difficult to describe my feelings about not being able to choose where I had my babies (I didn't know I could choose a home birth). The environment surrounding you at such a time is very important.

Please, please don't take away the choice to have babies at home - it is more than just a medical and statistical issue - hospitals can have strong psychological effects on people. It would take away the opportunity for mothers to experience a unique, natural event in the comfort of their own home and the company of the people they love - something that mothers have had the right to do since time began. It is wrong to take that choice away, just as it would be wrong to stop a mother from choosing a hospital birth with all the benefits of surgical assistance.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Eves