

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.

Although I eventually chose to birth my baby in our local hospital, I spent most of my pregnancy under the expert care of a private midwife who primarily assists women to birth at home. I hired her personally to mentor me through my pregnancy and to prepare me mentally for labour. My midwife was by my (and my partner's) side during my entire labour and was a valuable part of my birthing team. I was supported to make a choice of where to birth that made me most comfortable and although that was a public hospital, I had choice...and that is what it is about for me.

It is unthinkable to me, that in a democracy such as Australia, the choice to birth legally at home may be taken away and I urge you to support our homebirth midwives (and the women who desire to birth their babies at home) to continue their important work.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Taylor