

Dear Senator Moore,

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

As the mother of two children born at home with midwives in attendance, 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. Having had my first baby in the UK I was impressed by the range of choices and services on offer. Although totally happy with my decision to employ an independent midwife for my second baby's birth back in Australia, I feel that a system that truly offers choice to women on such an important issue as birthing is of paramount importance in our democratic society.

The intersection of the above 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 midwives in attendance at both my children's births at home I urge the senate to act on this matter urgently so that all women and families in Australia may enjoy the choice that was afforded to me and my family.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Brooks