

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 been involved in homebirth since 1998. I chose to homebirth all three of my children with a midwife. I have been a practicing homebirth midwife in the south of Tasmania since 2004.

I am now returning from 2 years in Singapore where I worked as a homebirth midwife with the support of two obstetricians. I would like to see this collaborative approach to women's maternity care in Australia also. I want to keep providing women and their families with the continuity and the wonderful way of homebirth.

I strongly urge you to ensure that homebirth remains an option for all Australian women. It is an essential model of care that midwives love to provide!

Yours sincerely

Rashelle Szoke