

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.

My youngest daughter was born at home and my wife and I think it was a fantastic and well-informed birth choice. We ended up with a content, healthy baby and a relaxed, healthy and well-supported mother and family. Making midwife-attended homebirth unlawful just does not make sense, given that it can be a safe, viable birthing option.

I also oppose the way that the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills take away the basic human right to choose how and where we want our babies to be born. Australians should retain the right to choose to birth at home. Independent midwives should be supported, not banned. I want for future generations to have at least the same birth choices that we have had up until now.

Yours sincerely,

Oberon Carter