

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 had homebirths for my 2nd and 3rd child after my 1st birth in hospital was not what we as a family wanted. We chose a midwife with over 30 years experience, a teacher of midwifery, and we had every confidence in her abilities and skill to help us birth our baby at home. In comparison to our hospital birth, our homebirths were empowering, relaxed and truly beautiful experiences we and our children treasure. I would be mortified if my children didn't have the choice to birth where ever they wished when their time came. The studies on the safety of homebirth are more than conclusive that a homebirth is as safe if not safer, with less interventions and better outcomes for families than hospital birth. Why in Australia would we consider putting more strain on our underfunded, under resourced hospitals, adding more people and babies to the system that are not sick and do not choose to be there? If a woman feels confident to birth her baby at home, let her do so with the support and guidance of a skilled midwife. Lets follow the lead of the forward thinking nations such as New Zealand and the UK and support midwives to support women in their homes, where they choose to be.

Yours sincerely

Trisha Gough