

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 had the privilege of having two children, both of which were born at home - through choice. I cannot express to you here in a few written words what a wonderful, empowering experience this was for myself and my husband. I would not have had it any other way.

Please assist all women of Australia by ensuring that the Medicare funding for Midwives includes funding/indemnity for homebirth midwives. What a backwards step it would be for all Australian women to limit the possibility educated birth choices - whether it be homebirth or hospital birth. I am not saying that homebirth is for everyone, but it should still be an option for the women of Australia as it is in the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Hewett