

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. However, I am concerned that homebirth is excluded from this funding and indemnity arrangement.

This would put Australia 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. This may well be an unintended consequence, but it means that the livelihoods of many exceptional midwives are at risk. Further, the women of Australia will have a fundamental right taken away from them. That is, THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE.

I do not support any government making the decision about where, and with whom, I can birth.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection and I ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqui Triggs