

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.

Ten years ago I was fortunate enough to have my daughter at home in Fremantle through a federally-funded midwifery program. It was an extraordinary experience to give birth in the comfort of my own home- in dignity and in privacy, surrounded by love, support and familiarity. I could labour in the garden, in front of the fire or in the shower- whatever felt right in that moment without the friction of having to fit into a hospital's schedule that might have had my coming and going before they deemed me suitably dilated to finally stay and give birth. When our baby arrived we could rest in our beds, knowing that in a day or two we wouldn't have to make a stressful journey home in the traffic- there was nothing I needed to leave the house for until I felt ready to do so. Why should this experience not be available to all women?

Please make birthing at home an option that is legally available to all women.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Robertson