

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.

In many respects, labour and birth are a normal process that many women experience on a day to day basis. In saying this birthing needs to be protected from too much intervention (that occurs in the hospitals) and what better way than in the home where the woman is supported by her midwife and family. The hospitals are already packed to the brim and understaffed so why put any more pressure on the system. We need to keep registering the homebirth midwives and provide them with indemnity insurance so that they can continue to do a fantastic job. They not only support the childbearing woman, they also support the family and the whole community in the process. You would be surprised at the number of midwives who choose to leave Australia and work in NZ or Canada where they are supported to be homebirth midwives. I thought Australia was more forward thinking and with some foresight and vision will recognize the huge mistake they are about to make if they do not take immediate steps to include homebirth midwives in the above Health Legislation Amendment and related bills.

Sincerely Yours,

Janice L. Knight RM