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.

On a more personal note, I gave birth to my son two years ago at home and it was one of the most empowering and wonderful experiences of my life. Whilst a medical system is vital for births that need medical intervention, most births can happen safely at home. Homebirth should be freely available for women who choose this. With so many births now overmedicalised, homebirth provides a medically safe and supportive and empowering option for women. Homebirth is a very special way for babies to come into this world. Please follow the footsteps of more enlightened nations such as Canada, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and New Zealand!!

Yours sincerely

Anahata Giri