

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.

Homebirth is such a natural right that it seems utterly absurd to me to take it off the legally supported options for women in this country. I have had two safe and joyful homebirths, supported by experienced midwives and homebirth doctors. My first child was head down and the second was breech. Homebirth was my choice because that was where I felt safest, most supported and most relaxed. As a healthy, fit woman with all the right signs for a natural birth, what better way to give birth than in the environment of your choice, which was for me, my home?

To think that this experience would be illegal in the future is more than sad. It is also extremely embarrassing as a nation to be seen to impose this on our citizens.

Give birth back to the choice of the woman giving birth. My body, my home, my choice!

Yours sincerely

Sharon Shostak