

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.

Coming from a perspective as someone who has birth three babies with a private midwife, one at hospital and two at home, I have experienced the positive and safe outcomes of birthing in an intimate and low intervention environment that is honoring of a woman journey into motherhood. This right of passage for low risk woman shifts the emphasis out of illness and into a celebration of the coming of life into a family. This support and process of self-empowerment has a great effect on the transition into mothering, as apposed to a process in which a mother can feel disempowered, without choice and dislocated. Woman need to be able to make these choices. Home birth is a safe, efficient care plan that supports woman babies and community toward positive relationships and healthy transition into a bonding family environment.

At the very least home birth is a sensible alternative, for low risk mothers, to provide availability of hospital beds to sick patients.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Buggy