

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.

My first child was born at home. I was part of a low risk group, which meant I did not have to give birth in a hospital. I was not obese, I did not suffer from diabetes, and my unborn child was not in a breech position.

A 'low risk' birth is not an illness that requires treatment in a hospital. If a woman has taken the time to investigate home birth, she should feel confident that in a free and diplomatic land such as our wonderful Australia, she will get the best support from midwives who are duly supported by a system that understands a woman's right to choose.

To give birth at home is an empowering experience. I was able to control the environment in which I gave birth. I chose the midwives to assist the birth. The entire birth process was enjoyable, and I attribute that to the midwives who were involved.

I am also aware that hospitals do not offer facilities for water birth. This was a major factor in my decision to birth at home. The ability to choose a hot water bath to sooth contractions was imperative for me to fulfill my desire to have a drug free birth.

For me a home birth is a wonderful empowering experience.

Yours sincerely

Nina Peheim