

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.

I have chosen hospital birth for two of my children and home birthing for my 3rd child who was born in September 2008. My home birth was without any interventions (which were unnecessary in my first 2 births) and the costs of the 2 independant midwives I had attend were paid for out of my own pocket costing the governement no money. My decision to home birth was fully informed based on many large studies that show it is safe as hospital birthing with less interventions which can have long term health benefits for my child which again reduces any costs the government will pay in medical expenses. I plan to have another baby and would be devastated if I could not again birth at home and was forced into our local hospital which has high intervention rates and is overcrowded. I am hoping you see the long term impacts that making it illegal for independant midwives to attend home births making them be insured but them not being able to access insurance. I fear that you will find that not only will women choose to birth without midwives and have more chance of complications or even deaths, but also the impac of long term health of our children with unnecessary interventions that do occur in the hospital system.

Yours sincerely

Michelle McRitchie