

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 husband and I are in the process of starting our family. Unfortunately we had a miscarriage on 22nd May this year. One of the fears to emerge after this painful experience, was that if we didn't get pregnant quickly, our baby may not be born before the 1st July 2010 and therefore, our choice for homebirth would become prohibitively expensive or we would need to risk giving birth without the assistance of a qualified midwife.

Giving birth is such an intimate, personal and important part of family life and one that we look forward to, hopefully in the near future. The right to choose where and how we give birth must be respected.

Yours sincerely

Renée Hasseldine