

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.

While Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue, Australia must not 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, and that right should be afforded to Australian women as well.

I believe an effect of this legislation on the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I ask that you take steps to specifically 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.

In short, legislation must find a way to allow women to choose a private, independent, qualified midwife as her care-provider throughout pregnancy and child birth in her own home. One-to-one midwifery care is the best practise in pregnancy and childbirth care for a large number of women, and so it must be made available to whomever would choose this model.

I am a 34 year old mother, privileged and grateful to have the care of one midwife through 5 pregnancies. All Australian women should have the opportunity to choose this care if she desires it, just as all Australian women can currently choose other models of care.

Yours sincerely,

Terri Niejalke