

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 personal experience of homebirth in Australia has been a wonderful, empowering experience. My first homebirth defined me as a woman, it made real just how capable I am as a person, and validated my choice in homebirth by having faith in my body. I had not expected such an emotional and healing outcome - but I am so very happy to have had two safe and beautiful homebirths in Australia.

It was expensive, it added financial hardship in my family where I was the sole wage earner. But, it was that important that we paid thousands to birth at home, rather than use medicare funded facilities that were not my own home.

Making safe homebirth illegal takes away the choice that every woman should have without question: to birth where she wants, with who she wants and how she wants. If a woman chooses to homebirth, it's her choice. If she chooses a c-section in a hospital, it's her choice. A family birth unit, or the labour ward.. her choice. Don't take away the choice of women!

Yours sincerely

Michelle Peglar, resident of New Zealand, citizen of Australia, mum to 3 (2 homebirthed)