

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 earlier this year was with the Community Midwife Program in WA. This program provides midwife care that is covered by Medicare. The service is not widely advertised as unfortunately it is not available to all mothers-to-be in Australia but perhaps this is the solution to the potential problem with which we are faced.

My birth was attended by 2 midwives and it was a fantastic experience that had me feeling calm, supported and safe in the comfort of my own home. I know home birth is not something that all mothers-to-be desire but to effectively force those that do wish to birth in their own homes to do so without the protection of using a properly qualified and registered midwife surely cannot be in the best interests of these mothers.

Yours sincerely  
Sharon Storey