

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.

A recent study (2009) of over 500,500 women showed that planned homebirth for healthy women with a well-trained midwife was as safe as hospital birth. Research by the World Health Organisation takes a further step, indicating that homebirth is at times safer for women having their 2nd+ babies, than in hospital.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

A healthy birthing women should have the right to choose who cares for her during her pregnancy and birth, and were she is to birth her child. A homebirth with a qualified midwife and birthing support should be an option for women of Australia.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Pogue.