

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 has been needed for a long time. I find it hard to believe that homebirth would be excluded from this funding and indemnity arrangement. The United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand all provide homebirth as a normal choice for women and they are not penalised for their choice. This is part of their health care models.

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.

Birth in Australia is not treated as a normal natural process, making many mothers fearful about giving birth. This in itself creates problems during labour and unnecessary intervention.

I believe that homebirth for low risk, normal pregnancies would be a choice for many more women if it were Medicare funded and if it were supported and as the safe option that it is.

It is time to move forward instead of living in a fear consumed, un-research past.

Yours sincerely

Meredith McLaren