

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.

I would also like to express how crucial it was for me to be able to choose my caregivers for the birth of my baby, and how if I can't have a baby at home, I may not have another child at all. Being a survivor of childhood sexual assault (as 1 in 3 women area), having a sense of autonomy and control over my body is very important to me. Homebirth and choosing who supports me and touches my body is vital in feeling safe and therefore laboring without anxiety. There is a strong argument to suggest that anxiety deeply complicates births, and leads to greater risk of a cascade of interventions, many of which are unnecessary.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Braunstein