

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.

Homebirthing frequently provides a more wholesome, positive experience for both the mother and the child. Hospital practices immediately post-birth are inevitably focused on the hospitals needs, not the most intrinsic needs of mother and baby at that time (e.g. skin-to-skin contact, delaying the cutting of the umbilical cord). I do not understand the rationale of this bill, which will completely remove a vital choice for so many women, and undermine the wondrous work midwives currently provide in assisting at homebirths.

I sincerely hope the government will listen closely to the needs of women on this issue. I am not a mother, but I am distressed to think that when the time comes for me to give birth I will be forced to undergo that most intimate of procedures in the sterile, impersonal environment of a hospital ward.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Regan