

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, and I believe that Australian families should have this same right.

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.

Personally, I have had the privilege of attending the homebirth of my nephew, just over six years ago, and I will be soon assisting my sister with the homebirth of her son or daughter in a few months time. I am also pregnant and will have the joy and opportunity of welcoming new life into our home early next year. It saddens me to think that had I not fallen pregnant so soon, that I would be faced with a dilemma as to how to find someone to support me and my husband to have the homebirth that we both desire.

I thank you in advance for deciding to take this request, and the many other that you will be receiving, seriously, and support the rights of midwives, women and their partners to birth at their homes.

Yours sincerely

Allison and Edward Berry