

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.

For the birth of my first child I opted for a hospital setting which resulted in a lot of unnecessary intervention and a regrettable caesarian section. I spent 7 days in hospital, a further 4 weeks receiving home help and it was over 3 months before I felt that I bonded with my baby.

With my second pregnancy I was adamant that I did not want a hospital birth. Although I had prepared for a home birth with a qualified midwife, we did end up transferring to hospital. This time however I had a quick forceps delivery, immediate contact with my baby and was home and looking after myself and my family the next day. I believe the support and continuity of care from my midwife played a large part in these very different outcomes.

The financial cost of my first birth was a substantial one for the government but the emotional cost to myself and my family was enormous.

Should homebirth be effectively made illegal in this country I would reconsider my intention to have a third child. Homebirth is not for everyone but it should be available to everyone.

Yours sincerely,

Tanya Crerar.