

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 have had both a hospital birth and a home birth. My home birth with experienced midwives was easily the most empowering experience of my life, and a very peaceful, healthy start to life with our newborn. The midwives were extremely professional and caring. It would be a complete disgrace and discriminatory if this option was not available to Australian women. In addition, I find it surprising that home birth is not seen as a way of lessening the load on our public health system. Please use common sense and ensure these midwives can continue to practise. They are performing an incredibly valuable service.

Yours sincerely

Nerida Weller