

Dear Senator Moore,

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

As a mother of a two year old, and wanting to have more children, I am writing 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. While Medicare funding for midwifery care is a welcome step in the right direction, it is not acceptable 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.

While I received excellent medical care for the birth of my son in a hospital, the whole experience was more frightening and strange than it needed to be. The overcrowded wards and theatres, resident doctors with unfortunately little bedside manner, and 'institutionalisation' made a trying time all the more traumatic. I would like to ensure that all women have the option to labour at home when reasonable, under suitable medical supervision. Please ensure on our behalf that private midwives will be able to continue in their work to deliver healthy babies at home, and provide the continuity of care that mothers deserve.

Yours sincerely

Irene Pottie

