

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.

Giving birth is one of the most enjoyable and difficult experiences that a family will undertake. It should be able to be undertaken in the surroundings and circumstances in which they feel the most comfortable and will provide the best outcomes for their family. The exclusion of cover for midwives wanting to assist homebirths will only further marginalize a perfectly safe and natural option of giving birth.

I know a number of families that have opted for a homebirth and all have had extremely positive experiences. They have not made this decision lightly, but have weighed up all their options. Most have opted for a home birth for their second and subsequent children after giving birth to their first children in hospital. For those who are able to undertake this option, it should be encouraged and supported.

Given the increasing costs of medical procedures and hospital stays, the option of homebirths also has the opportunity to contribute to a reduction in costs and help ease pressure on an already burdened medical system.

I look forward to hearing the members of the Inquiry have given due consideration to the wishes of the community and ensure that the anomaly in the legislation is removed so that private midwives are able to continue practicing with appropriate indemnity insurance.

Yours sincerely

Jacquie Stone