

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 plan to become pregnant next year and engage a private midwife for homebirth and have taken out private health insurance with Australian Unity specifically for this purpose. I feel fortunate that I can afford to do this. My reasons for choosing homebirth are for continuity of care during and after pregnancy and so that I am not pressured to conform to hospital policies that involve birth. I am a very private person and wish for birth to occur in a place where I feel comfortable and have established and trusting relationships with those around me.

I am a nurse and have spent time in hospital midwifery units which was a fascinating and wonderful experience. While many choose to give birth in a hospital, I do not believe they suit my personal needs for a quiet and private space. I believe it is my right to choose to give birth with a qualified midwife of my choosing safely and in the privacy of my own home. I urge you to support the practice of midwives who enable women to give birth at home. To not do so would cause enormous distress to myself and many other women.

Yours sincerely,

Felicity O'Keefe.