

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 two successfully short labours at birth centres in Melbourne (5 hours) and Newcastle (4 hours). Should I be fortunate enough to have a third pregnancy, it would be more practical for me, on many levels, to have access to professional midwifery support at my own home rather than attend an already busy birthing facility at a public hospital (where the meals just aren't quite as good as home cooked)!

I would appreciate your deeper consideration of these views and anticipate your favourable response.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Stokes