

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 benefited from ongoing improvements in maternity choices since the birth of my first child in 2000 and fourth child in 2008. I chose to birth at home: my first baby was born in a birthing centre within a hospital (I was not provided access to the midwives of my choice); my second baby although planning to go to the birth centre was born unattended at home; my third baby was born at home attended by two midwives after struggling to find any midwives available until I was seven months pregnant and preferring to birth unassisted if I couldn't; my fourth baby was born at home with my whole pregnancy/birth/postnatal care provided by the same two midwives throughout under a publicly funded homebirth service. I enjoyed the support of midwives who attended my homebirths and believe midwives are professionals who should not be denied national registration. I want women to be able to have their choice of midwife to support them through their birthing journey.

Yours sincerely,

Yolande Morton