

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.

My two girls were born at home and their births are some of the most wonderful moments that my husband and I have shared. We were wonderfully assisted by two well trained and experienced midwives who we had the opportunity to get to know before the birth. I have worked in the maternity wards at our local hospital, and while the staff there provide top quality care, they cannot provide birthing parents with the same experience that I had.

I tell my birth stories to other mothers and they look at me and say things like "I wish I had known about the birth center", "I would have loved to have done that too".

Please do not pass a legislation that will prevent women from being able to have the beautiful, calm, private, and above all safe, experiences that I had. Give them the ability to decide for themselves where and how they want to have this life changing experience that is birth.

Yours sincerely
Lee Swift