

Dear Senator Moore

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

I am writing 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. However it is not acceptable 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.

If homebirth midwives cannot be included in a professional indemnity scheme, they will not be able to register and Australian women will not be able to access the services of any homebirth midwives. I find this completely unexceptable and deplorable, that a women's right to choose who attends her birth will be vastly deminished due to the inability for homebirth midwives to be covered by an indemnity scheme. I am concerned for Australian women who choose to birth at home with an independant midwife and for future generations that their choice to birth where and with whom they choose will be taken away from them.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Smith