

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 daughter Eliza was born at home 9 weeks ago in what was a rewarding and safe experience for mother, child and our entire family. Although the Womens and Childrens Hospital in Adelaide will still be able to offer homebirths through their midwifery group practice, we are not in the catchment area, and my wife would be unlikely to meet their rigorous screening policy based solely upon her age. Under these new laws we would no longer be able to have a legal homebirth. If that is the case, then we are unlikely to have any more children as we are unwilling to enter the hospital system for what need not be a medical treatment. Home births have been proven to be as safe as hospital births, and this bill is a backwards step for this country.

Yours sincerely

Regards  
Chris Wolff