

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.

While I am now a 52 year old grandmother, two of my three children were born at home in Tasmania, safely and soundly under the care of a midwife, with little or no cost to the taxpayer. I feel strongly that women in this country should be afforded the same birth choices as many other developed countries and not be restricted in that choice by prejudicial legislation. I also feel this legislation may unwittingly encourage some parents, who chose homebirth on philosophical grounds, to "go it alone" without the medical care they should be entitled to as taxpaying citizens of this country.

Yours sincerely

Kim Eastman