

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 am a midwife who has worked with the free standing birth centre in Launceston for the past 16 years and have attended hundreds of births at home and in the centre. In the last 2 years our numbers have increased significantly as more women are choosing to birth out of the hospital. Lately I have been receiving many phone calls from women in our area who are distressed and anxious about their births and the births of their daughters in the future. Most are adamant that they will continue to home-birth no matter what which will leave them in a very vulnerable position, the likes of which we have not seen for more than a hundred years. What is happening to our democratic society when freedom of choice is being outlawed!

Healthy women choosing their own birth place with professional midwives in attendance are in the safest place!

Yours sincerely

Anna Holloway