

Dear Senator Moore

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

I am an Acupuncturist and Chinese Herbal Medicine Practitioner who has a special interest in women's health, pregnancy and childbirth. 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 homebirth is not a common choice with our culture, with a cesarean section rate of 30% in public hospital and 40% in private hospitals many women are scared of the hospital system. I believe that those women who choose to birth at home should not be disadvantaged in any way financially or legally by their choice. They should have access to affordable, safe, professional midwifery services that supports their choice to birth at home.

Yours sincerely

Karen Pohlner