

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.

As an informed mother of 2 sons, both born at home and supported by the quality care of an independent midwife, my concerns are these bills will not support women and their families, like myself and mine, who birth outside of the system. I, as is the case with the majority of home birthing families, did not choose to birth at home unattended but I/we employed the services of a home birth trained midwife. A midwife who worked, studied, trained and practiced within the hospital system, as well as the home setting. Our midwife had served under an apprenticeship scheme with an experienced home birthing midwife to learn the skills that aren't taught, practiced and perhaps even known within the hospital system. The body of knowledge that these independent midwives carry with them to each birth they attend is invaluable.

I am concerned these said bills exclude homebirth from this Medicare funding and indemnity arrangement. I believe that by doing this Australia would be 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.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Cuthbert