

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.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection. Having a baby is a devine right and as you would be aware under section 116 of the constitution it is stated parliament shall make no laws to restrict religious beliefs, practices, and observances. My partner is an independent midwife and has been one for 14 years providing service to women and their families in Northeast Victoria and Southern NSW. I expect her right to work in this country where she chooses be protected. I am concerned as an independent midwife she will be discriminated against due to her choice of place of employment. This situation is unacceptable.

While medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue, it is not acceptabl 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.

Yours Sincerely

Mr Glenn Relf