

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.

Please rectify this problem, make homebirth legal for the women who choose this method of care. It is a democratic right that no one deserves to remove. By outlawing homebirth we are contributing to the de skilling of our midwifery profession who currently under a medicalised system are limited in how they are able to truly be 'with woman' as their title requires of them. Let's integrate home birthing midwives into an infrastructure which values and upholds the skills they possess and support their exclusive knowledge base. It is wrong to suggest that homebirth is responsible for poorer perinatal outcomes. Let's compare apples with apples and read the literature that confirms that maternal and neonatal outcomes are almost equitable in both planned home birth and hospital birth and remember that there is much to say in the world of hospital birth if given the opportunity. We need to collaborate our childbirth health professionals and not create a division. By outlawing homebirth, Australia is essentially saying that those midwives who practice outside the confines of a hospital are not practitioners in their own right and require the technological assistance of machinery and policy constraints to achieve their outcomes. This is insane and the

research substantiates this. Please refer to the findings and not rule out this very intimate, safe and sound method of childbirth in Australia.

Yours sincerely

Marie Gentile-Andrit