

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.

This Committee is an important step towards achieving an amendment in the proposed bills. I would like all health consumers to be treated equally and therefore ask that all related legislation include midwives caring for women at home.

I have attended 3 homebirths over the past 20 years as a support person, and have found the midwives in attendance to be extremely professional, calm and positive in their role in assisting women to give birth. The choice to go ahead with a homebirth is never undertaken lightly, nor in ignorance. The midwives I have observed have established a relationship with their client and discussed all aspects of the impending event, their clients health and that of the baby. The mothers (and their partners) are well prepared through the midwives. The birthing event is also one of incredible support and monitoring from the midwives, as is the follow up afterwards. I myself had complications and was unable to choose this option but I have approximately 15 female friends who have been able to give birth at home, and none needed any further medical attention although all were later seen by a doctor. The women who choose to have a homebirth should not be excluded from
the proposed Medicare funding and the indemnity arrangements.

Yours sincerely

Robyn Gray

