

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.

Women will continue to exercise their right to choose where they give birth. By removing their option to be attended by a registered, skilled and competent Midwife, they will have no choice but to 'free-birth' (with no birth attendant at all) or employ a doula (an excellent supporter during childbirth, but not a practitioner trained and skilled in management of complications which may occur). This will lead to a totally unnecessary greater risk for mothers and babies, with potential for both neonatal and maternal morbidity and mortality.

I am a Registered Midwife with 30 years experience, privileged to work in a Midwifery Group Practice offering continuity of care to women throughout their pregnancy, birth and till 8 weeks post birth. Whilst we do not offer homebirth, by providing community/home based ante and postnatal care, with very early discharge from birth suite, this is the nearest a public system can offer in Queensland. Sadly very few women have the opportunity to

choose or access this style of care. Removing access to independent Midwifery will place greater stress on such programs, with increasing applications to extremely limited places.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Please show women you also support their rights to be treated equally, and ensure the above Bills be amended to provide Medicare funding and Indemnity Insurance to all qualified, registered Midwives, wherever they choose to practice their profession

Yours sincerely

Hazel Mastin