

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Dear Senator Moore

I am writing to express my concern about the bills: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two other related 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. This is a good step as Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue.

What I believe is not acceptable, however, is to exclude homebirth from this vital funding and indemnity arrangement. For these bills to be passed the way they are, you would be taking away a woman's right to choice of birthing with her midwife at home. Also, by doing this, Australia will become totally out of step with other 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

Deborah Shilling