

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.

I am a midwife working within the hospital system. After careful consideration and research, my husband and I chose to have our second baby under the care of an Independent Midwife in the safety and security of our own home. I have seen many good and not so good outcomes in the hospital system and believe that it truly is not, the only safe place to give birth. Many recent studies that have looked into, place of birth and related outcomes for mothers and babies backs up my belief. Allowing this legislation to pass will deny me of what I feel to be, one of the most important decisions I will make in mine and my child's life. To be able to choose continuity of care by an Independent Midwife, and give birth in the secure and comfortable surrounds of one's own home must not be taken away from Australian women, however small that number may be.

Yours sincerely

Aleta Rowling