

12/7/09

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

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, particularly given the implications for ongoing registration of homebirth midwives.

If private midwives are not supported to continue to provide homebirthing services:

1) Hospitals will be confronted with large numbers of laboring women who simply do not wish to be there. They will have felt coerced into a hospital setting against their wishes. This will have extremely negative consequences for the moral of staff working in the hospitals. These types of patients are likely to be more litigious and more "difficult" than women who have made an active choice to be there.

2) Homebirthing will move underground and be completely un-regulated. This is a significant loss of consumer protection and will lead to an increase in "freebirths".

3) As a consumer I will no longer have the choice about where to give birth and with whom. I believe this is a significant impost on my human rights.

I ask that the Senate rectifies this situation as a matter of urgency by changing 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

Ilana Solo