

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 that the intersection of these Bills with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will effectively outlaw independent midwifery, by preventing them from legally being registered. Making homebirth midwifery illegal is a backward step for Australia.

These laws would effectively regulate independent midwifery out of existence, a situation that I believe is a violation of the human rights of birthing women in Australia. Homebirth is a widely accepted and safe practice, with rates of 12% in New Zealand and 30% in Holland. It is practiced in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, and in many other countries. Homebirth is the sound evidence-based practice of safe and natural birth. Effectively outlawing the practice of homebirth with an independent midwife is a backwards and shortsighted step.

Although I have not had the opportunity to birth at home (my daughter was delivered by caesarean section), I am a strong supporter of the right of Australian women to homebirth. Many women want an independent midwife to attend them during their births. Do not take this support away from these women. If a woman can demand an elective caesarean, a woman should be able to demand a midwife-attended homebirth. Outlawing independent midwifery is not the way forward for sound birthing practice in this country.

The Committee should take steps to include independent midwifery in the Bills under consideration. Medicare funding and prescribing rights should be extended to homebirth midwives. Independent midwives should be either included within funded insurance schemes, or exempted from insurance requirements.

Yours sincerely

Michelle King