

Dear Senator Moore

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

We are writing to voice our concerns over the implications of the above bills on families who wish to have a homebirth. While we certainly support the idea of the bills to enable Medicare funding and indemnity provisions for Midwives for the care of women giving birth, it is NOT acceptable to exclude woman who choose to homebirth and have the support of Midwives....a practice that has been in place for millennia.

While it may not be the open intent of the bill to disadvantage women who homebirth, nether the less this is the result. The bill also impinges on an individuals rights to autonomy in choosing the care path that is best for them after considering the available information. Given that other western nations such as Canada, New Zealand, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom provide for homebirths, doing so is hardly unreasonable, but rather the mark of a nation who honors individual freedom in making informed choices.

There is a growing trend in health care to keep people out of hospitals and provide care in their own home. This is seen as better for the individual and the public health system as it reduces the growing demand on a struggling hospital system while still providing care to the individual. The effect of this legislation seems to be out of step with this principle.

If this legislation is passed, it will be integrated with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals and prevent homebirth midwives from registering. We ask that your committee take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills, so that consumers are treated equally in regard to funding and insurance protection. This will not only bring the bill into line with other Western nations, but also honor rights of autonomy, with the right to choose and the growing trends of community health care.

Yours sincerely

Bruce & Narelle Howard.