

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. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

This bill infringes on women's birthing choices and options.

The right to choose how and where to birth is vital to the wellbeing of mothers and babies in this country. If as a women I chose to have an elective caesarean for no medical reason the state will not only support, but to also pay, for this right; yet if I chose to give birth in my own home with the midwife of my choice at NO COST to anyone but myself I will now be committing a crime.

This is despite the overwhelming evidence that points to the safety of homebirth. A recent Dutch study involving over 500,000 women showed that homebirth was at least as safe as birthing in a hospital. (Source: [de Jonge A, et al. Perinatal mortality and morbidity in a nationwide cohort of 529,688 low-risk planned home and hospital births. British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology 2009; DOI: 10.1111/j.1471-0528.2009.02175.x]).

I urge you to take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills. Choosing how and where to birth our babies should be an absolute right in Australia.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Yours sincerely,

Alice Every