

Ms Claire Moore

Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
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 home birth 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 home birth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose home birth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent home birth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include home birth 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.

My daughter is one of the women who have previously been able to make the choice to have a home birth, with a registered midwife. I object to the right to make this decision being taken from women [and their partners] after the middle of next year, if the legislation is passed in it's present form.

These parents are not some "hippy" fringe element, they are people who have carefully weighed up the situation and have decided on the best birth option for them and the baby.

If women today are supposed to have "equal opportunity" then why shouldn't they have the right to choose a home birth, with a fully indemnified midwife, if they so desire.

As funds in today's hospitals are overstretched I would have thought that women undertaking home birth would have helped ease the funding crisis somewhat.

Yours sincerely
Christine Stone