

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.

These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include homebirth 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, and have no desire to live in a world where someone else decides what care I can safely receive at different times of my life. There is not a single other circumstance I can think of where care options are dictated, and I believe only a fine line exists between this step to effectively outlaw independent midwifery, and compulsory medical treatment being forced upon those who do not want it. Know that women will still birth their babies at home. Whilst I do not intend to have any more children, my last hospital birth experience leaves me with no desire to return to a hospital to give birth again. It is this (lack of) 'care' that drives many women to seek options for birth outside of the hospital system, and this will not cease. All that will happen is that women will be forced to birth without a health professional at their side, and therefore without the safety net of someone being there who can identify and treat deviation from normal, healthy birth. By preventing independent midwives from being registered, you are creating the very thing you are aiming to remove - unsafe birth. Let's have some common sense, and some respect. The research is all there, planned homebirth with a midwife is safe. Don't take it away.

Yours sincerely

Bernadine Brook