

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 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. I also write from a professional perspective, as a midwife currently working in the hospital system. I'm devastated that this legislation is reducing my career options even further than the systematic closure of Melbourne's birth centers already has. I did not study Midwifery to end up working as the equivalent of an American Obstetric Nurse, nor did many of my colleagues. This legislation will not encourage Midwives to keep working in an already understaffed system.

Yours sincerely

Felicity Occleshaw