

Dear Senator Moore,

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

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Mt Beauty & District Country Women's Association Branch to express our concern about the above bills.

If these bills are passed into legislation in their current form, there will be no provision for funding or indemnity for homebirth midwives. This legislation will then intersect with National Health Registration legislation (to come into force in July 2010) that will require all health professionals to hold indemnity insurance. As privately practicing midwives have been unable to secure indemnity since 2002, this will prevent those who provide homebirth from registering and thus make their homebirth practice unlawful.

We 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. However, it is not acceptable 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. We 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.

The members of the Mt Beauty and District Country Women's Association Branch strongly support and recommend:

- \* an amendment in the proposed bills,
- \* all related legislation include midwives caring for women at home,
- \* a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection, and

- continued support for further reform in maternity services in Australia, including supporting a woman's right to choose her place of birth.

I thank you in advance for taking the time to consider our concerns and recommendations, and trust you will give this matter your upmost attention.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Toniolo

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