

Nicole Raward

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.

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 am a mother of three happy , healthy children. My first child was born in Lismore Base Hospital in 1998. My partner and I had a positive and supportive experience there. My partner was able to stay for the first two nights, as I was luckily given a private room. This was crucial to my emotional well being, a young, exhausted, anxious first time mother and also for my partner, who needed to stay close to his child. Since funding cuts in 1999-2000, this wing has closed and new mothers are placed in a shared ward, with no option for the father to stay.

I live 40 minutes from the closest hospital with birthing facilities and 10 minutes from Nimbin Hospital where there is no midwife and a doctor on call. My first birth was very slow and the birthing ward was full. So they sent me away for a few hours, then later home. I returned to hospital the next afternoon in full labor 40 minutes in the car. This night was also very busy. We hardly saw a midwife. I was told to ring the buzzer if I needed and was monitored approximately on the hour. I never saw the same midwife. I never saw a doctor, except on my day of release three days later.

What a contrast to the births of my other children at home. My partner played a very active part in the birthing process. My midwife was present for the entirety of both births, she lived five minutes away. I saw her for all my prenatal checks, as well as my GP. The midwife was very professional and visited my home prior to the birth. She kept very detailed records of my pre birth health, the birth and my postnatal care, as well as the health of my child. All these records were given to me. The midwife visited me everyday for the first week after the births, and a few times during the following week. My midwife assisted me in creating a birth process where my partner and myself were

empowered, my family was included, in our home where my safety, and that of my baby was the midwives primary concern. We chose to pay for our midwives services, knowing that I was in a low risk birth category and that a similiar service was a free option in hospital.

I am aware of many homebirths in NSW where a midwife was not in attendance. One (not the only) of the factors of the parents decision to birth in this way, was shortage of homebirth midwives. Another was cost. There will always be women choosing homebirth. Why put these women and their babies at further risk by increasing the number of births unattended by professional midwives? Please reconsider the bills and trully present women with all birthing options.

Your name

Yours sincerely

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Nicole Raward