

20th July 2009

Tessa Popelier

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 have grown up with my mother as a practicing homebirth midwife. Throughout my childhood I have experienced the power and strength a woman and her partner gains from giving birth in a familiar home environment.

I am currently studying Nursing and the University of Tasmania, and after I graduate I plan to go on to study to become a midwife. If this legislation goes ahead as it is, what does this mean for my choice of career?

I believe that all women around the world should have the right to choose where to give birth to their children, and I find it hard to accept that women in

New Zealand or Holland or the United Kingdom can give birth wherever they choose, yet potentially they will not be able to in Australia.

I urgently ask that the bills are reviewed to include private practicing midwives, and ultimately, women's rights to give birth at home in Australia.

Yours sincerely

Tessa Popelier