

20th July 2009

Nicole Nance

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.

Just as women have a choice of care within the hospital system, (whether they choose an obstetrician or go through a midwife lead clinic, which is subsidised by Medicare), they should also have a choice as to where they birth their babies.

I believe that it is every woman's right to be able to choose the environment where she feels safe, secure and supported by caregivers that will respect her choices on how she will birth her baby.

During the VBAC birth of my third child I was told by a doctor, whom I had never been examined by nor consulted with, that my choice to birth naturally may result in death to both myself and my unborn child. Needless to say, I went on to have a

wonderful natural birth assisted only by a fantastically caring midwife, my husband and doula.

Should I consider having another child, I would like to think that the option to birth my baby at home with a caring support team, headed by a certified midwife, would be available, and that I not be forced into the hospital system because a group of politicians, that have never met me, thinks that this would be the best care for me.

Let birthing mothers have the choice! Let them also have access to the same funding and insurance protection!

Yours sincerely,

Nicole Nance