

19 July 2009
Michael MacDonald

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

It has been suggested to me that the above bills in conjunction with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will have the effect of preventing homebirth midwives from registering and thereby remove a woman's choice to birth her baby at home with a qualified and experience midwife - effectively making homebirth illegal in Australia! I would be greatly shocked and angered if this were to occur. I believe homebirth is a safe alternative to hospital birth and a choice that women should have available to them. Homebirth should be supported, not stamped out.

My first son was born in hospital and although long and tiring, it was a pretty good experience overall. When my wife fell pregnant the second time we decided to explore other options, to seek out the best birth option. She indicated a desire to find out about homebirth. I was concerned about homebirth but we did our research, our due diligence. What I discovered was that my worries about homebirth were completely unfounded, my fears were not based on fact (I didn't know anything about homebirth) but the fear of the unknown, the fear of doing something not mainstream, the fear of what would my family and friends think.

In the end, we chose to have a homebirth. It was the right choice for us. It was the type of birth that we really wanted: drug free, pain free, loving and safe. I witnessed the most amazing transformation in my wife. Through her preparations for homebirth she let go of her (and society's) misconceptions of birth and the fear of birth. She embraced it and we had the most amazing birth experience. My second son was born in a birthing pool in our study at 4am after a 6 hour labour. There was no frenzied yelling and screaming as so often is portrayed in movies. Just the power of a woman birthing her baby. Wow!

What made our homebirth experience possible was having an experienced and trusted independent midwife throughout, from antenatal, through birth and postnatal. We also employed the services of a Doula. Both of these women were fantastic at what they do and I hate to see homebirth midwives stopped from providing the professional care and service they offer to women seeking a homebirth.

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. I ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

Please support the great work of homebirth midwives.

Yours sincerely

Michael MacDonald, BSc (ANU)