

Ms Claire Moore  
Chair  
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto: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 had two homebirths. My first child was born in a hospital and almost died due to medical incompetence. I chose to have my other two children at home because I believed I could do a better job and I trusted my midwives. I believe every woman should have the right to choose to take responsibility for her birthing experience. In addition, from my experience as a perioperative nurse, I see many caesarean sections. I question the necessity for many of them, particularly when many obstetricians claim they are pressured into performing them because of fear of litigation. Once a woman is in the hospital process she is very vulnerable to those professionals who treat childbirth as a disease and not a natural process. It is then often a slippery slide to the caesarean section. I hope our legislators spend less time watching American television with its distorted view of the birthing process and appreciate that there are some women who choose to see it as a normal process and wish to take responsibility for that process themselves.

Yours sincerely  
Beverley Nicol RN