

Monday, 20th of July 2009
Katie Denereaz

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

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 wish to say on a far more personal note (as this legislation impacts on not only midwives, and women & husbands with an impending birth but their entire family....which can itself be considerable, their friends, and a great many more) - that 1 Aunt, 1 Cousin, 1 Sister of mine have all after much learning chosen a home birth. This has been a well thought out decision, with all involved accepting personal responsibility.

For myself I was a 'support' person for my sister at her home birth - meaning if her husband needed to rest, eat or sleep that I would step in to support her. My mother was also present in order to look after my nephew & there were the recommended two midwives there as well. I have to say of 'our' experience it was safe, happy, loving & so filled with joy that our hearts overflowed.

My grandmother arrived with my father, just hours after the birth was thrilled with the 'adventure' we'd all had. (to quote our grandmother) Needless to say it was quite a family event with more involvement, help, & happiness after the immediate arrival of my niece than if she'd been born in hospital & having experienced it I can only say we would all have felt the loss, if this choice had not been possible.... Having being a part of such a miraculous time - it would most definitely be my first choice to have a home birth with registered midwives present & knowing the insurances etc was O.K would add to my peace of mind. Every family deserves

this CHOICE - regardless of where they live in Australia. I say this especially as I live in rural Victoria & I know from looking into it while living in Queensland that your choices for a birth with registered midwife diminishes greatly, the further away from Brisbane, that you live. (I assume it's the case in Victoria too) this seems such tremendous disadvantage for those of us who don't live nearer to a capital city or lager regional center.

This isn't simply an ignorant nor a pollyanna attitude - our Aunty had a stillborn baby born at home. She and her husband still went ahead with a homebirth for their next birth. (Which went well for all involved, their 'baby' at that time is now very happy living in Europe - where they seem to have this choice more often than not) I grew up on a dairy farm & our father bred horses - we have been around birth all our years at home - and yes, on occassion it didn't go as straight forward as mother nature intended BUT for the vast majority of the time it did. Due in part to education, prior planning and good referral to medical care.

Yours sincerely

Katie Denereaz
