

15 July 2009
Alana Zonta

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 not allowing women to have a choice about the way in which they want to birth I feel is a direct case of discrimination and is unexceptable in our times.

I understand that there is a great need for hospitalization and intervention in a large percentage of births in our country, but there are also a large majority of low risk birthing women who do not require the services of a hospital to birth their children. Substantial research has shown that in a low risk pregnancy, homebirth is just as safe as a hospital birth provided the woman is attended by a qualified experienced midwife, and I feel that this research should be greatly considered and evaluated before a decision is made to exclude homebirth from the bill.

In current times and with the advancement of our society, I feel that our out dated thoughts and research on homebirths should be put aside and current research bought forward and judged on it's own merits. The women in our country need to have the right to fair and unbiased information and accesses when they are considering their options for birthing. Other developed countries have considered the research available and have accepted homebirth as part of their legislation so why can't we do the same.

I hope that all the information is thoroughly considered in the writing of this bill so ALL Australians are treated fairly and equally regardless of their beliefs and opinions

Yours sincerely

Alana Zonta

