

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Monday 20 July 2009

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 never had a home birth. But if my partner & I are lucky enough to conceive again, home birth is one option that I would certainly consider. The other alternative is birthing through a local public hospital through their 'Midwifery Group Practice'. Both these options would currently give me access to a known & trusted midwife, but only birthing at home would allow me the opportunity to share the experience with our three year old twins. After the highly medicalised & traumatic birth that we all experienced back in 2005 when Ella & Finn arrived, I feel I owe it to my children (& future generations of our family) for them to see & feel that birth can be beautiful, safe & sacred, as opposed to our experience of sterility, cruelty & trauma.

Please Claire, help ensure that women's choices are not eroded as part of the up & coming national registration of all health professionals. Many women value the role that midwives in private practice fulfill & many more would, if they realised that having a medicalised birth is not their only option. Failure to embrace midwives in private practice is a back wards step as evidenced over many decades of international research.