

20th July 2009

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 which is a fantastic result for mothers and midwives.

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.

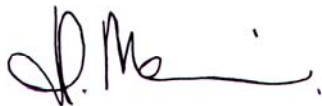
I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

I have two children of my own and both were born at home with midwives supporting the delivery. My first child was born in the UK and the midwives were available as part of the health service (i.e. for free) and they were actually trying to expand their homebirth midwifery service. At the time of birth we actually had three midwives in attendance, as two were training to be involved in homebirths. Our midwife took us through a delivery plan and we were prepared for any unfortunate developments and had action plans to be taken to hospital if any complications arose. The comfort of having our child at home was awesome. We had a wonderful, successful birth at home supported by great midwives.

My second child was born in Australia and we had to employ and pay a midwife. This was quite expensive but it was important us to have the birth how we wanted to have it. Again we were prepared to transfer to a hospital if need be. We had a beautiful, natural birth. At home we had family support (my mother and sister) and I was able to be relaxed and comfortable. This was another fantastic birth which made our family bonds much stronger.

The biggest issue I have with these bills is the loss of choice. If homebirths are not included in these bills then homebirths effectively become no longer an option or choice for women, or women who want a home birth will do it without a midwife in attendance! I could not think of a worse result from this legislation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Macnair', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Helen Macnair