

16/07/2009
Shelley Lyne

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 am the mother of six sons, five of them born in the loving security of my home. I know first hand the importance of allowing women the choice to birth in the place they feel safe and protected. Further, I am aware of the positive impact this has on the birth outcome, the family unit, and therefore society as a whole.

Women must not be denied the fundamental right to make choices regarding their bodies, and the way, and place in which they choose to bring new life into the world. Research continually indicates that homebirth is safe. As a consumer I am appalled that if this legislation is passed women be denied the right to choose.

Yours sincerely

Shelley Lyne (mother, grandmother, registered nurse, doula [birth assistant]).

S. Lyne