

7/7/09

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.

{Please add your own comments here}

See attached letter (please read!)

Yours sincerely

Your name

J. M. Haviland

To whom it may concern,

My name is Ingrid Haviland and I have something to say about the health legislation amendment of the Midwives and Nurse Practitioners Bill 2009.

I have 4 children, Celia, Odin, Max and Jean. Because of where we lived at the time of pregnancy (Capella-Central Queensland) we didn't have much option. I would have preferred to have homebirthed, but unlike in the Netherlands (where I'm from), we weren't 10 minutes away from a hospital. Celia was born in Clermont hospital. When pregnant with Odin, I got on to the wonderful Birth Centre in Mackay-Queensland. That's where he was born. Max was induced and therefore born in hospital but everything was straight forward and Jean was again born at the Birth Centre. So all of my birth experiences were good ones and I can confidently say I would have been able to have had them at home. But we were close enough to a hospital so we had a safety net to rely on. That was our choice!! (The Mackay Birth Centre is outside / separate for the hospital)

I simply cannot believe that we have to fight for home birth! It should be an absolute basic right for women to do so if that is their choice. We live in Australia, a western society with plenty of medical knowledge. Where does this need to control our every move come from? We are going the American way where people are used to point the finger at someone and say; they are responsible so they need to pay (literally!). This is where the idea of eliminating choices comes from as far as I can see it.

I think nowadays everything gets looked at from a risk point of view (what if this or that goes wrong?). It is a wrong attitude to have. Women have homebirthed for centuries! That term probably wasn't even used so many years ago, it was simply the way. If a woman chooses to homebirth and this choice is informed (she knows exactly what is involved) then why not support this? I say leave the decision up to the woman, that, is her basic right!

The right of choosing for homebirth is as basic as the right to freedom of speech. Take that away and what is there left over to choose from? The choice has been made for us. Women will be considered (and are already considered) medical cases with risk factors instead of capable women in control of their own birth process. People need to understand that if you give power back to the woman and support her that this will enable her to create the best possible outcome (without unnecessary intervention!). Can't we simply come up with a contract that a woman signs whereby she accepts her responsibility in this choice?! I just can't understand why there is such a can't-do-attitude to homebirth.

As I stated before, there is plenty of medical knowledge, it is the attitude of health professionals/people (the ones opposed or indifferent to homebirth) that needs to shift or is it just ignorance? Certainly, in the Netherlands it's just not even an issue. There, you homebirth unless there is a medical indication and you need to be in a "controlled" environment.

There is no doubt in my mind that we need to keep the choice to homebirth accesable. I still hope that this will be the case in years to come! Needless to say I feel very strongly about this issue and I want to think the Government Senate Committee will make the right decision. Thank you, Ingrid Haviland,