

20 July, 2009
20 Merewether St,

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.

As a mother of 3 adults, all of whom were birthed in a hospital setting with unnecessary intervention and against my expressed wishes for natural birthing. The real issue for me was that I had discussed with the obstetricians for my last two births my wishes but at both deliveries what was expedient for the doctor took priority not what was best for either myself or the baby, at no stage in either birth had the baby shown any signs of distress and I'd been in labour only about 6 hours in each case and second stage only 1 hour. It is clear that all 3 births could have taken place without any of the unnecessary intervention if good midwifery had been available. If I knew what I know now, I would without hesitation have had these birth at home and naturally.

Yours sincerely

Mary E Kennedy