

22 July 2009

Tina Valentine

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 had my two beautiful daughters at home, with the help of a fantastic midwife and GP. I am concerned that people like myself, who wish to have medical support in their own home will be forced into the hospital system. I find it appalling that as a minority group, we are simply being forgotten. I am lucky, I do not intend to have any more children but my concern is for future generations of women who will not have the choice I had. I also wonder what my midwife, who has been attending home births for 20 years will do if the legislation passes in its current state.

Please ensure home birth midwives are not excluded from this important piece of legislation.

Yours sincerely

Tina Valentine