

17 July 2009

Kelly Barrett

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 am Australian, but was living and studying in the UK for 5 years. During this time I gave birth to my daughter. I had a wonderful home birth, where I felt supported and safe. My choices were honoured and it was even for free. I am deeply disturbed that I am living in such a backward country where birthing options are being reduced, not increased. As a woman I urge you to take a stand and protect women's rights. You are in a role where you can affect the community, what a fantastic opportunity for you. Women need to be able to choose home birth and midwives need to be able to support them and have insurance.

I am now pregnant with my second child and I plan to homebirth. I expect I will have a third child in the next 3 years and also expect to home birth. I am insulted that these choices might be taken away from me and that these talented midwives will be in a position where they have to work illegally.

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 would like a personal response please.

Yours sincerely

Kelly Barrett