

9 July 2009

Natalie Scobie

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.

When pregnant with my third child, my husband and I made a considered, educated choice to birth at home with the support of two independent midwives. This choice provided me continuity of care throughout my pregnancy, birth and postnatal period. I chose to birth in the safe, relaxed space of my own home, with the medical skills and expertise of my midwives as well as the loving support of family and friends. I chose to birth in a way that allowed my older children to be closely involved, allowing them to experience birth as a natural, normal part of family life. I chose to birth in a place with the lowest risk of intervention, and the highest chance of successful breastfeeding. The enormous benefits and incredible experience of my homebirth completely outweighed the significant financial cost of this choice. I am devastated that my right to determine where, and with whom I give birth may be taken away from me, and incredulous that next pregnancy I may be forced to give birth without the legal support of a midwife.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Scobie