

9 July 2009
Leonie Harding

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 delivered my second baby at home, with two caring and very knowledgeable midwives. This option was instead of the planned caesarean suggested by one doctor. As there was no medical indication for caesarean, I had no complications in birth. My midwives were totally prepared for any situation in birth, and had informed me about the best strategies for birthing without intervention. My birth reduced my recurrence of postnatal depression suffered after my first caesarean birth, and has resulted in greater success in breastfeeding for my baby.

As a public patient, I estimate that the caesarean birth would have cost the state thousands. Instead, my homebirth cost me only, and was worth every cent.

In a democratic community, we have a right to free speech, a right to freedom of worship. We should have a right to freedom of birthing choice,

Homebirth midwives are performing an important role in our community, one that has been in place for thousands of years. By allowing midwives to practice at homebirths legally, we save the state's public hospital funding, and nurture the needs of individual mothers in the community.

Please heed our words.

Yours sincerely

Leonie Harding
One mother, one voice, one vote.