

10/07/1009

Natalie Sunderland

Ms Claire Moore

Chair

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto: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 birthed my beautiful baby girl at home in December 2008 with my husband and two wonderful midwives present. I knew I would be tested mentally, physically and spiritually, but I did not want the temptation of drugs and interventions during my labour. This is just one of the few reasons I chose a home birth. Bringing my daughter into our home and sleeping for the first night together as a family was important to both me and my husband. We suffered no car trips to and fro hospitals, no staff changeovers and no undermining of our wishes during the process. I had an uncomplicated pregnancy, and a professional midwife who believed in my ability to birth naturally. My baby's birth was everything I wanted it to be.

It is my right to birth at home again when the time comes and to take that from me is wrong. Women's right were fought for, and won, decades ago. Will we now start taking steps backwards for women's rights? Surely not.

Birth is a family affair and women have a right to choose to birth in their home. It is beyond belief that a country such as ours would make something as wonderful as homebirth illegal. Please do not penalize women who prefer to birth at home. Birth isn't about politics. Birth is about bringing new life into our world and celebrating each in own way. For me, that means a home birth. You have no right to take that right from me.

Yours sincerely

Natalie Sunderland