



10th July, 2009

Ms Joy Cocks

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.

Although I work in a hospital in a team midwifery program I strongly support the option of homebirth for women. My eldest grandson was born at home into my hands and this was the most wonderful birth that I have ever witnessed – so different to hospital birth, so much more relaxed, no intervention in the natural process, with no pressure to be moved from the birthing room to a ward, etc. It was my daughter's birth and she was in control of it, no random strangers coming into the room in this most private of events. Please, for the sake of Australian women and their babies, don't exclude homebirth midwives from this legislation.

Yours sincerely,

M Joy Cocks
Midwife (for 38 years)