

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.

What is going on with birth in this country? So many reviews so little happening -& every time a committee sits something gets taken away from women's genuine choice. I have had 4 children 3 in hospital & my last child was born at home, her birth was planned at home with a

midwife without the benefit of insurance or funding. One to one care with an independent fully qualified midwife is a safe secure and viable (not to mention cheap!) option for women that CHOOSE this option. How come a woman can choose the most expensive care in Australia and have to do nothing more than "decide" and the Govt happily pays the bill, yet a woman who chooses to birth with an expert midwife is offered no support from Medicare or the health system? This is the only field of Medicine where a patient starts with a specialist and then has to prove that they don't need one. I had to pay for my midwife out of my own pocket and would happily do this again! & this is not my greatest concern. **I cannot believe the Labor party would make home birth essentially against the law.** This is a frightening abuse of government power and strips women of their rights at a most basic level- at a time when we need them most. There is a lot of good in this legislation, but the gain will be nothing if you exclude the least expensive least demanding patients and insist they conform to a standard not even endorsed by the World Health Organisation. Without government intervention to provide that insurance for midwives, as they do for doctors, midwives will be unable to practice. Please do not take this option away because demand is small or the numbers insignificant.

Yours sincerely

Gail Pizzi