

Clare Blake

10th July 2009

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.

One of the reasons that my husband and I moved from the UK to Australia was for a better lifestyle for our future children, this starts with the choice to have a homebirth. I am very passionate about this topic, having worked as a Doula in the UK for 3 years; I have been present at many wonderful homebirths, all of which gave the couple the chance to bring their child into the world in a peaceful and familiar setting, with the woman given the freedom to birth how she wanted. I have also spent many years researching the effect of hospital vs. homebirths, and do not want these effects to be forced upon my future children.

I am about to start trying for my first child, and the thought of being forced to birth in a hospital frightens me – that is the first thing we try to eliminate in births – FEAR! Therefore, I plead you to hear our requests to give us the choice to birth at home.

Yours sincerely

Clare Blake