

8th 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.

I have birthed two children at home and these two births have been the most incredible experiences of my life. Having the opportunity and the choice to birth my babies at home meant that I was able to experience birthing just how I believe it should be experienced – beautiful, natural, empowering, comfortable, safe, a truly blessed experience. I did not want the risks associated with hospital births, in particular the high levels of intervention and the consequences of such intervention.

Homebirth is still going to happen and by not allowing registered independent midwives to legally attend these homebirths it opens up huge risks for women and their babies. A woman who upon choosing to birth at home without being able to use registered midwives won't know what she is getting and this could potentially be hugely risky for that woman and her baby.

I cannot believe in this day and age that safe home birth can be made illegal – that a woman's choice to the most beautiful and safe (statistically proven safer than hospital births if any one would care to actually obtain these stats from the appropriate sources) experience of childbirth can be taken away from her – it is truly ludicrous!

Please don't take away my right to choice where and how I birth my babies.

Yours Sincerely

Terri Scott