

9th July 2009

Ms Erin Horsley and Dr Andrew Hammet

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.

We are a highly educated professional couple who has experienced maternity care in the UK. It was disappointing to find on our return to Australia that we could not receive the same level of midwifery care and the option to homebirth . It was then that we decided we needed to take what many (wrongly) saw here in Australia as a "radical" course of action. To employ Independent Midwives and to birth our baby at home.

We chose not to employ an Obstetric specialist, like many of our peers, because we felt that a medical specialist was not necessary and wasteful for a healthy complication free second pregnancy. Our greatest concern was to have the medical and emotional support for a natural birth.

After suffering unnecessary intervention during a traumatic first birth and having to deal with subsequent post traumatic stress syndrome. We needed to ensure we had effective emotional support for an intervention free birth, and postnatal care to ensure a positive start to breastfeeding and to lower the risk of recurrent PTS and postnatal depression.

We therefore consciously used our baby bonus to employ two independent midwives to look after our family's physical and emotional wellbeing and were extremely satisfied with our choice.

We are therefore horrified that 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.

We support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Please protect the rights of Australian women to homebirth and protect the future of my daughters future to also have the choice to safely birth their babies at home with registered midwives

Yours sincerely

Ms Erin-Maree Horsley
Dr Andrew Hammet
Miss Stella Hammet
Miss Sunday Hammet