

12th July 2009
Catherine FARRUGIA

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 three beautiful boys in the past 7 years, all at the Royal Brisbane Womens Hospital. For my third son I was fortunate enough to access the Birth Centre which operates on a case load midwifery model. The benefits I experienced of having a known midwife support me through my pregnancy and peaceful water birth were out of this world. I found my third experience of birth to be the most amazing, empowering and gentle of the three. I credit this to my midwife, Karen and the profoundly positive effect that her continuity of care had on me and my family.

A Birth Centre is considered to be a homelike setting, so therefore there are many similarities between homebirth and birth centres. I personally know of many women who have experienced Birth Centre care and have birthed subsequent babies at home. If I were fortunate enough to be blessed with another pregnancy I would demand the right to choose a homebirth!

Yours sincerely

Catherine Farrugia