

July 12, 2009

Tricia and Ku Darroch

Ms Claire Moore  
Chair  
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto: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.

Our daughter, Lila, was born at home, with a midwife and doula present. My labour was simple and fast, and Lila was born 4.5 hours after my labour began. I don't consider birthing to be a medical "problem," and I felt safe and supported to give birth at home. Over several months, I had built a strong relationship based on respect and trust with my midwife. The result was a smooth birth and the safe arrival of my healthy baby, in an environment in which I felt totally relaxed and comfortable.

I realise that very few women choose to birth at home. Many take the word of the medical establishment that giving birth in hospital is the right thing to do. And I respect that. If a woman feels safe and comfortable to birth in hospital then that is, indeed, the right place for her to be. But for other women, birthing at home is the right thing to do. Those of us who want to make that choice deserve the right and support to do so. And the wonderful, inherently responsible and extensively experienced homebirth midwives

who assist us deserve the government's support so that they can continue their good work.

It makes no sense whatsoever to outlaw homebirth. Surely it's in the best interests of all concerned – midwives, families, doctors and hospitals – to support one another.

Please, I sincerely ask you to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

Yours sincerely,

Tricia Darroch.