

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

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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 did not have a homebirth but am certain that the medicalisation of the hospital setting was what slowed down my labour on 3 separate days. Each night I had contractions, each morning I arrived at the hospital to nothing. I ended up 'having' to be induced, then later that day 2 epidurals (the first only worked on one side), and finally 12 hours later an emergency caesarean as my baby was getting distressed from the Syntocin. This was extremely traumatic for myself, my husband and my daughter. The midwife said she sees it happen far too often.

Please do not take this backwards step - lets move birthing forward.

Yours sincerely

Nicky Fraser