

7 July 2009

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

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.

My father, his brother and my 3 nephews were home birthed and I need to express my disappointment that I may be faced with losing the choice to have a home birth. Please keep Australia up to date with the rest of the world and maintain our rights as women and families to chose how we birth our children. I could not stand the thought of the government trying to control how we as a family have our most private and beautiful moment of bring our children into this world.

Birthing to me as a modern woman is about celebration. Hospitals are for people that are ill and need to be treated. My home is where my child should be birthed, with my family. Many communities for many years all around the world bring their children into the world in their homes.

I beg you not to allow a government to take my right to choose away from me and my family

Yours sincerely

Joanne Thompson