

08/07/09
Jodie Downey

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.

When I laboured with my first child, I stayed at home as long as I possibly could to avoid the intervention that happens so much in the Australian hospital system. Due to the shortage of midwives and the hospital hierarchy, often women are not given the choice to carry out their birth plans as they want to, I was lucky that I had the strength to stick to my plans and not be overridden, many women are not so lucky.

With my second baby after a difficult pregnancy and complications I still managed to have a natural birth with minimal intervention despite the Dr's telling me constantly that I needed to be induced.

The right to chose homebirth that is well supported and offered as a real choice would be the best birth experience and should be made available equally to Australian women.

Yours sincerely

Jodie Downey