

16th July 2009

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 am in the happy and privileged stage in my life, a grandmother. I myself was blessed with 5 wonderful children. Unfortunately, my births were for the most part very much marred with very clinical memories and not the quiet natural event that should have been. I had little to do with the whole proceeding – I was told what to do and when. I felt that I was a cog in a wheel – not very important, quite ignorant and inexperienced – had to leave everything to the specialists. I also found that births don't naturally coincide with hospital or doctors schedules – as with me, today our babies are being coerced into arriving at a convenient time. ..often without the mother being aware of the pressure being put on her and her baby to arrive at an appropriate time. I beg you to make it possible for the young women who do realize that their baby has the right to be born when ready and in a welcoming family environment, to have the same rights as any mother and baby should have in this day and age – to ignore this right, it has to be the worst kind of discrimination in our 'enlightened' age.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Josephine Ford