

9 July 2009.

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**

My husband and I write to express our concern about the above bills. We 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.

We support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

The decision to birth at home came from a strong instinct to be supported and cared for by a select few individuals in a safe and friendly environment, and the only way for us to do this in our home town of Wagga Wagga was to engage the services of an independent midwife. The care, support and attention my husband and I received under this arrangement was the key in having the birth we wanted. It was totally devoid of the disjointed, overcomplicated and intervention-based approach that sadly is all too common in today's medicalised hospital system.

I, like most pregnant women (prior to entering hospital) am healthy and are considered low risk therefore it makes sense for women like me to leave the limited hospital beds for the sick and dying. To take away home birth options from women in this day and age seems absolutely ludicrous and a major of disrespect of human rights.

I know home birth is not for everyone and the benefits of this option are yet to reach the Australian community to the degree that it is supported (and encouraged) in the other countries mentioned above. I therefore feel that Ms Roxon and the Federal Government have a tremendous opportunity before them to follow the lead of these forward thinking countries and significantly improve Australia's maternity services.

I urge you to consider the views raised herein and make the necessary amendments to the proposed bills that do not exclude our highly qualified, experienced and essential homebirth midwives.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty and Tim Matthews