

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 my partner and I came to consider the place and method of delivering our baby girl (Eden, born 12/02/2009) we came to the conclusion that for us – the safest and most desirable place would be our home, accompanied by a professional and experienced independent midwife of our choosing.

The home birth we had experienced was truly remarkable, and for any future births our choice would be clear. If that choice is taken away from us that would be very regrettable. What are people expected to do – travel overseas where the laws are more accommodating of people's rights to choose - in order to deliver the baby there? Surely that is not what a modern, democratic government would wish upon its citizens??

I am hopeful that abovementioned amendment to legislation takes into consideration the full picture and does not discriminate against an increasing minority.

Yours sincerely,

Yanai Stolarski