

13-07-2009

Meika & Mark Staley

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**

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

Had this legislation been in place already, we would not have been able to experience the truly wonderful experience of the safe and one hundred percent natural delivery of our daughter Gemma at home on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June this year. We chose to have two wonderful private midwives provide all of our antenatal care and therefore felt completely relaxed and fearless when our daughter arrived in breech position at home. As a first time mother, I would not have been allowed to deliver her naturally at hospital, yet due to the knowledge and professional experience of our midwives, we trusted that we would be able to safely do just this. You can see from our photo that we now have a healthy baby girl and mother who have had the best outcome possible.

While we acknowledge that the decision to birth a child at home is not desirable or viable for all women, we feel that all women, as owners of their bodies, deserve the right to decide where to have their child, and this legislation will, we fear, make this impossible or perhaps even have devastating consequences for those of us who feel that having a baby is natural and not intended to be a medicalised process which must occur in a hospital. We feel strongly that the expertise of our two midwives were the major contributing factor to the birth of our Gemma. Therefore we implore you to ensure that midwives are covered in the above amendments, so that all Australian women can at least be given the ability choose the form of care they receive when planning the birth of their child.

Yours sincerely

Mark and Meika Staley