

13.7.2009
Nadine Waldbaum

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.

My experience with my home birth midwife with the births of both my sons was phenomenal. I have never before received such committed and dedicated care from any other health care practitioner. She was available to me 24/7 for any need or concern I had, and very trustworthy and reliable with all the information, education and choice she gave me. She was beyond a midwife for me and my family, she became part of our family and will always feel like one of us. Anyone who has been pregnant or been around a pregnant woman knows how physically and emotionally challenging it gets, and our midwife was of tremendous support in every aspect for me and my family.

Birthing my son at home was the most empowering experience I have had in my life. To go through labour and birth a woman needs to feel safe and supported, and no where else but home could I feel that. I had the full confidence in myself, strengthened and supported by my midwife, which I know as a fact that in hospital settings isn't very encouraged.

As a Doula (birth support person) I have experienced hospital births, and seen how healthy pregnancies and labours turn into traumatic birth experiences. I have spoken to many women who have had horrendous birth stories due to the lack of respect for her wishes and choices and unnecessary intervention.

I think that Homebirth is not suitable for every woman or family, but it is vital to allow for the right of choice to have the kind of birthing experience that feels most safe and supportive for each individual. Denying that right is a violation of freedom of choice, and I would like to know that Australia is a country that does not deny its citizens of that right.

The model of supported homebirth has been working very well in many other countries, there is no reason why it can't work here. Women are the same all over the world; we all need to feel safe and supported. If you are a woman reading this, surely you relate to that. If you are a man, surely you have had experience with women and know how we operate. Please find it within yourself to help support the home birth community and the amazing midwives out there who's work goes beyond all expectations.

Yours sincerely

Nadine Waldbaum