

13 July 2009
Evelyn Dwyer

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 have a 9 month old son who was born in hospital. I would like to have the option of a homebirth in the future if I have any more children. While my experience in hospital was not all bad, it is very uncomfortable having to get up and into a car in the middle of labour and move to a completely new environment. I had a natural birth in hospital with no drugs or medical intervention apart from monitoring my baby's heart rate. This can happen at home with a midwife. I would prefer to give birth at home, where I feel safe and comfortable, with my family around me. Please make sure that homebirth is still legal and safe in Australia.

I am sure that many other women would also choose homebirth if it was more freely available.

Yours sincerely
Evelyn Dwyer