

July 13th 2009
Lisa, Peter, Katelyn and upcoming new baby Richards
93 Merivale Street
Tumut NSW 2720

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

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. 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.

I am a mother, a midwife and an Australian and I believe every Australian family has the right to choose the way they birth, whether that be at a hospital setting or in their own homes. By passing the above legislations, that Australian right for every family will be taken away and the choices as consumers will be cut.

We have chosen to birth our baby at home and knowing our midwife and knowing we are being cared for by the same midwife; who will then come to us in our home and provide the love and support we need for our birth, is the most reassuring part of our journey. We support the continuity of care provided by an independent midwife who supports women in homebirth, by introducing the above legislations this continuity for women and her family will be lost forever.

Yours sincerely

The Richards