

14/07/09

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 am writing to express my concerns 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 arrangements. Australia is already out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand, and excluding homebirths and the right support for midwives who provide the care required for homebirths puts Australia even farther behind.

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. Our nation cannot take a step backwards!

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 naturally birthed both my children in a special ward linked to the birth ward at the Gold Coast hospital, The Birth Centre. It creates an at home environment for women who cannot have a homebirth, like myself, but with the care of midwives on hand. If my home environment had allowed me to have my second child at home I would have happily done so. Also a friend recently successfully birthed her first child

at home and her experience was enviable. I commend any woman who makes that kind of decision, to do it the way they want and not the way they're told they have to do it.

What is important here is that women have the right to make the homebirth decision knowing that a midwife will be provided and supported by the government.

Yours sincerely
Lozen McDiarmid