

13 July 2009

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**

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 am writing because I am not someone who thought I would ever have a homebirth. After I became pregnant, I began to seriously consider all my birth options, and the ability to choose my own carer and level of care became very important to me. After researching the safety concerns, I was totally satisfied to find that the research confirmed that I could expect as good outcomes from a homebirth as a hospital one, and so we decided to spend the money to engage an independent midwife. Interestingly, our insurance company (Teachers Federation Health) effectively recommended a homebirth as they would allow us to claim our midwife expenses only if we had a homebirth, not if our midwife attended us in a hospital. Our son was born at home late last year with no complications whatsoever. It is difficult to know that if this legislation is passed, what we did will become illegal. On what grounds can this be justified? I strongly feel that all women should have this choice, and to deny it is a serious injustice to birthing families.

Yours sincerely

Alina Gollner