

14th July 2009

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Moore,

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 and, as someone who has birthed in a hospital, I fully support changes improving care to those wishing to use hospital services. It is not acceptable, however, to exclude homebirth and midwives in private practice from this funding and indemnity arrangement.

I have 2 children, who were born in a standard maternity ward and a midwife-run birth centre. I was lucky enough to not have any major complications with either birth, but birthing with a known midwife radically changed my perception of birth and gave me the ideal start with my second daughter. If we were to have another child, I would want to be certain that I was cared for by a midwife who knew me, my history and my birth plan. I believe I should be allowed to make this choice, just as anyone can opt for a private practitioner for any health service. If I didn't get into the small number of available programs with the major hospitals, this would mean homebirthing and paying around \$5000 without any financial assistance from the government. However, if this legislation passes, next year I would be totally unable to access this service unless I 'win a ballot' to get into the local birth centre. I find it astonishing that the government would not allow me to choose (and pay for) this service, and would force midwives to work for a hospital rather than in private practice.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I 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.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Jones