

14.07.2009

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

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.

While I can appreciate health care professional and politicians making health care decisions may believe they have the best interests of women at heart, ultimately the protocol and procedures surrounding a woman's choice to birthing is hers and hers alone to make and every woman has the right to be supported in her birthing choices.

I support and encourage a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding, the same insurance protection and the same rights to the birthing options of her choice. Excluding home birthing midwives from the above mentioned bill denies women those rights.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Keats
Supportive rights to birthing choices for women advocate