

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 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.

Our four homebirths with an independent registered midwife was because of several reasons. Firstly, we believe everyone should have the right to choose the place of birth. Secondly, our choice was influenced by our desire to keep away from the hospital systems. Our third reason was the high level of care and support provided by a private midwife right through the pregnancy, birth and beyond. The pregnancies were normal and straight-forward, and therefore we felt that this was a much better approach during this very important stage of our lives.

Postnatal checks were also carried out by the same midwife. Our opinion is that public health systems are already under-staffed and research shows that hospital births are more likely to involve some kind of intervention during birth compared to the more natural and gentle approach of home-birthing.

We live in a semi-remote area, and would like to think that in this democratic country with freedom of choice, that the same opportunity would be available for future generations.

Yours sincerely

Rita Parker