

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.

In our opinion there is a degree of scare mongering going on from certain self-serving parties. Home birthing is incorporated into many overseas models of care. One of the closest is our neighbour New Zealand. Their successful system enables expectant parents to have adequately funded care in both home and hospital, private and public birthing systems. It also enables midwives in private practice to be covered with indemnity insurance. The choice for where parents desire to birth their children is a fundamental human right.

We have a healthy niece and nephew, both of whom were serenely and safely born in the bath at home, with two highly knowledgeable and experienced midwives present. The learning, research and preparation that our sister/ brother-in-law did was very in depth. We strongly doubt that expectant parents going through the hospital system would be anywhere near as prepared as they were! They have now started to pass on their knowledge and details on where to find information to make an informed decision to us both as we are now trying to conceive. The information that they have shared has strongly impacted us and enabled us to make the decision that we will birth our children at home. If this legislation is not amended our dream to homebirth will be destroyed.

Yours sincerely

Joel & Alexa Brinsley