

14 July 2009
Kylie Crompton

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. 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 accidental and ask that you act to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

I fully believe that all forms of registered midwifery care should be publicly funded. From a purely financial standpoint, it makes sense to fund the cheaper midwifery model as well as the more expensive obstetric model. It also makes sense to fund homebirth midwifery for appropriate women who have the desire and would otherwise cost the public more if hospital based midwifery were the only option.

From an emotional standpoint, I believe a woman's right to choose the location of the birth of her children to be an instinctive right. Furthermore, women will continue exercising this instinct with or without qualified assistance – if homebirth midwifery is outlawed, mothers and babies will be at risk.

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.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection. For myself, I surveyed 4 local hospitals and birth centres but found none suited my needs. After a successful homebirth attended by two registered midwives, I would wish the same choice available for all women regardless of financial circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

Kylie Crompton