

8th July 2009
Ms Lori Pott

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.

My personal homebirth journey began when my husband and I were planning our third child. While we were satisfied with the care we received within the public hospital system we were never happy with the hospital environment and began searching for an alternative. Having had no issues with my previous pregnancies and births we could see no reason why homebirth should not be a viable option. Being a librarian and a research scientist we naturally started researching and checking out statistics (those of the non-biased, non-skewed nature) and the more we read the more convinced we became that this was for us. We never once considered that something as ridiculous as a lack of homebirth midwives may prevent us from following this path. For some that is a very sad reality but we are very lucky in Toowoomba to have a very small group of extremely dedicated and professional homebirth midwives.

Our midwife cared for us (and I say “us” because my husband and two daughters were always included in every step) throughout pregnancy, birth and beyond. Her attentiveness, professionalism and genuine concern for the well-being of myself, my baby and my family filled me with confidence and incredible strength. Remaining within the comfort of my own home surrounded by two experienced midwives, a wonderful doula, my husband and family resulted in a very relaxed labour. As I held my new son, my four and two year old daughters gushing over him, the room was filled with an amazing energy. Three months on I think back and realise how lucky we were to have such a wonderful experience. How incredible it is that my two year old talks of her baby brother coming from Mummy’s tummy rather than the hospital.

It is my request as a woman, a mother, a human rights advocate and an Australian citizen that you review the facts, look at this rationally and do not deny other parents the choice of homebirth.

Yours sincerely

Lori Pott BA, Grad Dip LIS