

14 July, 2009
Naomi Roberts

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.

I am a mother of one, with my second due in three months time. My first pregnancy was a very troubled pregnancy – I was bleeding from 27 weeks – and was hospitalized and on bed rest for the remainder of my pregnancy. I ended up having an extremely traumatic, lonely and scary caesarian section at the end. But we were lucky – our beautiful daughter Zoe was born perfectly healthy.

This time around I have chosen to birth at home. This pregnancy is completely normal and healthy, and I desperately want to have a natural birth in the comfort of my home. I'm hoping to have the opposite of traumatic, lonely and scary.

I write my story because above all, the most important thing to me is that I have the CHOICE to birth in the way that I want. I believe it is my right in this democratic society I live in to make the choices I believe are best for myself and my family. I BEG BEG BEG you to support mine and other women's choices around their births.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Roberts