

14th July 2009
Lauren Turner

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.

As a midwife and a consumer in the Australian maternity system it makes me very sad that our government refuses to acknowledge women's choice in birthing. The evidence against homebirth lacks credibility and in fact the best outcomes for women and babies are in an environment that the woman feels empowered and safe. I myself felt safer at home than in our highly interventionist hospitals when having my first child and as a practitioner I hope to be able to offer homebirth support to women in the future if that is what they want.

Although I applaud the changes that are proposed for the Australian maternity system I am disappointed in the government for not bringing our country in line with the many other nations that support homebirth, I believe it is a great disservice to childbearing women.

Yours sincerely
Lauren Turner