

13th July 2009

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 own experience of running a caesarean support group for 8 years is clear evidence of the first class health care that is provided by private practicing independent midwives. They are professionals who care for the whole family in a holistic manner that brings far reaching health benefits. I have always been struck by how strong, confident and vibrant women were after birthing with an independent midwife; as this often contrasted with the doubt, regret and resignation that accompanied birth in our 'standard' models of care.

I strongly appeal to the Government to do justice to the women of Australia, provide them with true choice, not dictatorial choice that is led by fear and greed. Women want what is best for their babies and themselves, women who choose to birth at home truly believe that this is the best option for their birth. The evidence does not exist which gives the Government the right to dismiss this as an option.

Yours sincerely
Carolyn Donaghey