

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.

Please include homebirth funding in this bill.

I had my daughter at home and fortunately my dad paid for my midwife team (who were truly marvellous) as my husband and I were just starting out and could not afford the fee, I was so stressed out about the thought of having my baby in a hospital, (I have never been in one) But then knowing I could give birth at home made the whole experience less stressful and a very positive one. (Despite the long labour, I gave birth completely drug free and naturally.)

I feel strongly that women MUST be able to have the choice of where they want to give birth.

Please support home birth midwives and don't take away yet another choice that we are able to make for ourselves in Australia.

Yours sincerely

Melinda Morriss