

14/07/09
Vivienne Van Nunen

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 little girl was born 6 weeks ago at Box Hill Hospital managed through the 'Know Your Midwife' program. Her natural birth was wonderful, without any medical intervention, and took 2 hours and 5 minutes from my first contraction. The care of the midwives was outstanding. Should I have another child, I would like very much to consider a home birth. My labour time may be shorter again next time, I birth very well naturally and, most importantly, I trust midwives to care for the natural birth process that is my privilege to own.

My family has recently had the incredibly sad experience of having a baby die at birth. The mother's labour was just 1 hour long, and she didn't make it to hospital on time before her perfect little girl died.

Please support all midwives and mothers equally.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne