

14.7.09

Dianne Clare

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 first child was a home birth, my second child was born in a remote location and small hospital [no homebirth options available]. My experience of homebirth was that it was a client-focussed and professional service; it encouraged self-care, self-responsibility, offered support and maximized opportunities for addressing any potential barriers to post-delivery bonding and care *before* delivery. The result was a pregnancy and delivery where I felt safe, confident that if any medical issues arose my safety and the safety of my child would be top priority, and all opportunities to foster maternal bonding were encouraged. I experienced a good delivery, no post-natal depression, no medical interventions, close and immediate bonding with my baby and, even as a first time mother, a calm confidence. All this at a time when my personal circumstances [relationship with my baby's father] was in a state of crisis.

I read extensively about the pros/cons of homebirth. My experience bears out what is commonly reported - high levels of maternal confidence, good bonding between mother/baby, minimal cost to government due to lack of need for interventions and hospital stays, high level of self-responsibility. My experience of homebirth was also that it was sensible, calm, personal, honoured the joy and uniqueness of birthing and greatly reassuring of me as I faced a major life change.

Yours sincerely
Dianne Clare