

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

My name is Ilka Oster and I have three children, my third child was born at home with two private midwives attending the birth. The emotion that wells up in me when I think of my wonderful home birth experience is not easily explained in words. It has had a profound and effect on me and my children, my husband and my extended family. I live in a small country town and I'm sure everyone who heard about my daughters beautiful birth was also touched in some way. I have always felt very proud and blessed to be an Australian. How wonderful it is to have the freedom to choose your own birthing experience in this Country. To remove this freedom would be a step backwards for the individuals rights of midwives and birthing mothers in Australia.

I therefore 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.

Yours sincerely

Ilka Oster