

12/07/09
Rebecca Lewis

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.

I have birthed three children myself, two of them in a birth centre and one in a private hospital. There were no complications in any of my births, however I was concerned by the fear based approach of my obstetrician during my last birthing experience. Given the demand on birth centres and the high rate of transferal to obstetric care I feel strongly about having any future children at home, with the care of a profession midwife who shares my view of birth. I feel it my human right to give birth in the safety and comfort of my own home. Please support women's rights and our choice to give birth safely in our own homes. Australia needs to come up to the standards set in New Zealand, the U.K, Canada and the Netherlands where women's birthing rights are more respected and honored

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Lewis