

15/07/09

Jasmine Johnston

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.

Having not had children yet this is of a major concern to me; I want and should have the right to choose whichever form of birthing practice I would prefer and be comfortable with when the time comes. Forcing people to take the road that SOME people consider best completely derails the ideas of freedom of action and decision in this country. Taking options away from people is not what parliament is for, you are supposedly there to represent what the community wants and needs, even if there are only a few (and I know there are many many more than that) then it is your job to provide the support and action which makes the practice of home birthing possible for each and every person who takes that road.

Yours sincerely

Jasmine Johnston