

15th July 2009

Liisa Rusanen

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 hope this is simply 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 personally gave birth to my son in hospital in the Blue Mountains, but would have had a homebirth if it was easily available, and I wish to give birth to future children at home. The birth of my son in hospital was quick and straightforward, with no medical intervention required. However, the hospital was clearly desperately understaffed (they actually tried to send us to Penrith, but the labour was too quick) and I found the medical environment stressful. I would have much preferred to be at home, both for my own comfort and to avoid taking up a bed in an already over-stretched hospital system.

Yours sincerely,

Liisa Rusanen