

15/07/09

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 am a Midwife and am currently practising as a midwife and have been practising for 25 years. I believe that all women should have the choice of where they choose to have their baby. Birthing is not only physical but also an emotional and spiritual journey. I have worked and am working in all areas of where women birth, Home, Hospital, Birth centre, in team, hospital and independent practice, what I have learned over the years is: women know what they want when it comes to birthing, when they have informed choices they make informed decisions on what's the best choice for them and their families and where they feel safe to birth and be respected for the choices they have made.

I fear that by outlawing homebirth, that the professionals ie midwives and doctors who support homebirth and make themselves available for women who choose this option, work towards healthy outcomes for mothers and babies, will not be available. This puts families and babies at risk as women will still choose to home birth. We may see an increase in unassisted homebirth with sad outcomes or women choosing people with no midwifery or medical experience helping

with home birth. All the cochrane research on birthing shows that homebirth is a safe option for women who have being well informed and are well supported by the midwifery and medical teams, as these professionals are aware when to transfer to hospital when necessary or when to stay and have a homebirth.

I would urge you to consider including homebirth an option of care for women and their families.
Gloria O' Connor.

Yours sincerely

Gloria O' Connor