

15th July 2009

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 had one child, and the first 20 hours of my labour was spent at home with a private midwife who was fully equipped to monitor my progress. I wanted to be in comfort of my own home, with my friends and relatives there to support me and to supply me with what I needed to get through this difficult time.

I went into hospital for the last 6 hours of my labour as the birthing unit was empty and I knew that the facilities I needed were available including the birthing bath and the larger room. If these facilities were not available due to overcrowding I would like the choice to stay home. Further if I wished to stay at home in a familiar environment with my family where I can receive more personalised care with a trusted midwife that I have developed a relationship with during the course of my prenatal care, I believe I am entitled to have that choice.

There were no complications with my last pregnancy and birth. I was confident that I was in safe hands with my midwife the whole time I was at home.

Yours sincerely

Cheryne Mallett