

15/7/09

Ms Claire Moore  
Chair  
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto: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 chose a homebirth midwife to support me at home during labour and then to be an additional support person during the actual birth within the hospital environment.

My husband and I are both qualified professionals, not radical extremists.

Our educated, informed choice was best for us and our baby. It also took considerable pressure off a stretched hospital system. My long labour was allowed to progress in it's own time, without using a cent of hospital funds, or space.

I was only comfortable to do this with the support of a qualified, experienced registered homebirth midwife. We covered the cost of this ourselves, with no support from either government or insurance.

Who benefits from the effective criminalization of the profession of homebirth midwives? Clearly not mothers. The research is very clear that for low risk births, home births are just as safe as hospital ones, but have fewer interventions. So not babies either. Parents who choose homebirths reduce the costs and pressures on our hospital system. So the taxpayer doesn't benefit either. Obstetricians? Is this really all about Obstetricians wanting to maintain and increase power over midwives?

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.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Davis