

15 July 2009

Atlanta Zwar

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.

As a consumer, a woman and a mother, I choose to live in a democratic country which encourages free speech and where we are free to make our own decisions. Childbirth is a life changing experience for the majority of women. Woman should be entitled to choose the care and birth place that if offered to them at this important time of their life and not be forced into birthing in a hospital if they don't wish. Having a baby in a hospital can lead to many unnecessary interventions, is not always a positive outcome for women, and limits the choice that a woman has at such a crucial time in her life. There is no reason why birthing at home cannot be practiced safely with experienced midwives and be governed by standards and regulations in order to ensure the safety of the mother and baby. These choices are offered to women in other countries, so why not here in Australia?

Yours sincerely

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