

15th July 2009

Ms Claire Moore

Chair

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

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 two beautiful children. Giving birth is such a personal experience. I believe that Australian women deserve to have the right to choose the homebirth option, if that is what feels right for them.

Although my strong preference was to have homebirth, I was not able to do it because of medical reasons. And the right thing for me was to give birth in hospital. But for many of my friends the right thing was to give birth at home and they had wonderful experiences.

In the name of future mothers and babies in Australia, please give them the option of having homebirth.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely

Biljana Isabella Cace