

15 July 2009

Therese Shannon

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By email only: 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.

Whilst I have not yet had my first child I fully intend to do so at home, with the support of a midwife. I look forward to a birthing experience in my home with all of my loved ones present which is not possible in a hospital birth as they are limited by space. Homebirth is encouraged in my family with both my sister and my nephew's wife having given birth at home. However, with the system the way it currently stands I cannot afford to do so. Medicare cover for midwifery attending homebirth is a very important issue to me as this cover will enable me to give birth to my child in the comfort of my own home with my family and loved ones at my side.

Yours sincerely,

Therese Shannon.