

Deirdrie Cullen

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 would like to express that I have 3 children with the last being birthed at home as this was my only option after 2 caesarean births. I would not have considered having her if I didn't have this option available to me, as safety is a priority to me and my family. If the above bills had gone through before her birth we would be without this amazing child on our planet. I don't want other families to have to make this decision because they don't have birthing options.

Homebirth is a safe option for women and should be all women's rights to choose this for them and their families. My family is living proof of the safety of a healthy child born at home when no other local maternity units would allow me to birth a 'vbac'. The experience was empowering, enlightening and truly bonding and after having the 1-2-1 midwifery care at home I would love all women to experience it as their right.

By birthing at home with a known midwife we have taken the responsibility ourselves and had less expenses on the health system. There is much evidence to support the safety and cost effectiveness available which I am sure that your Govt. has looked into. Thus I don't understand why this situation has arisen, as we don't want homebirth to go underground and women to birth at home without care of a midwife.

Please consider homebirth midwives to an indemnity insurance or making an amendment to the bills. Midwives have a right to a safe and fair job situation too, they are respected within our community as they are the community in the making.

Yours sincerely

Deirdrie Cullen
9/7/09