

16/7/2009

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 qualified midwife working in a hospital setting, I support the provision of safe, supervised birthing in the setting preferred by the mother. Some women will choose to seek homebirth, and I believe the safest way to care for these women is supporting homebirth midwives with insurance, registration, medicare funding provision and backup support that is readily available. As a consumer, I believe the bill should be adjusted to allow choice for all women to have qualified pregnancy and birth care in or near their place of residence. I am concerned about the distances rural women must travel to access this care, and provision of more midwife (private home and public based) care can help this situation.

Yours sincerely

Your name
Linda Corby (Mrs)