

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.

Both of our daughters were born at home, the first in 2006 and most recently on the 3rd of June 2009 in a birthing pool in our lounge room. My husband and I are devastated at the thought that homebirth may not be an option for us in the future.

Our experiences were ones that we will never forget and ones that seemed totally natural and stress free. I felt home birth was the most obvious choice for me as my pregnancy was low risk, I was not sick I was simply pregnant! Having home birth as a choice meant that I could avoid any unnecessary intervention that was not needed and that may have been offered in hospital. It also meant that the midwife who had supported me throughout my pregnancy would then care for me during the birth and provide post natal care. This continuity of care is something a lot of my friends have not received after their births and have commented on how lucky we were to have had this.

I birthed at home in an environment that was comfortable for myself and my husband and one that allowed our eldest daughter to be a part of the experience. What frustrates me is that a woman can demand a caesarean that is not medically necessary, but a woman who wants to give birth in her own home may now be seen as a criminal!

Yours sincerely

Megan Pelusey