

16 July 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.

I support a system where homebirth midwives have the same access to funding and indemnity insurance as their counterparts who work in hospital settings, so that I can have a legal birth at home.

I have known for ten years, since the homebirth of my God child, that when I give birth to my children I would choose homebirth.

I would like to have my chosen midwife and my family with me so I can birth at home, where I feel safe and comfortable. It is very emotional to think of this scene with my partner supporting me, we don't have to go anywhere, we both feel comfortable and our baby is born into our arms in our home.

I encourage you to consider women and their families who wish to birth at home safely with their chosen midwife.

Yours sincerely

Shari Bonnette