

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 after all we are paying taxes and should not be discriminated against for choosing a more natural option.

I chose homebirth after having 2 children in hospitals (one in the U.S.A. and one in Australia) and one at a natural birthing clinic (in the U.S.A.). For my 4th child I wanted to have the most natural birth I could and it seemed there was no better place to do that than in my own home environment. I was not comfortable to 'go it alone' so was thrilled to find homebirth midwives available. The level of care I received in my own home was extraordinary and one of the fantastic things was that it included the entire family. The birth went very well without the dramas of the previous hospital experiences, and we also, as a family have a wonderful memory for our entire family, which is priceless!

Women need to be given a choice and that choice needs to be supported and respected - financially, physically and emotionally.

Let's not go backwards!

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Bailey