

16/07/2009
Carly Zandstra

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.

During my pregnancy I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes. My obstetrician told me that I was irresponsible, and that if I didn't do as he said, he my baby would probably die. My obstetrician tried to arrange for me to have a cesarean at 36 weeks, because he said "This baby is too large". My midwife supported and encouraged me to allow my baby to grow safely, and he was born TWO WEEKS overdue, weighing 7LBS!!! I will not deny that I was very frightened, but my instincts, and an EDUCATED, EXPERIENCED woman who CARED about ME and MY FAMILY got me through. I would have been more frightened in a hospital, being hooked up to machines or cut open and having my baby taken away from me for testing as soon as he was born.

This is HUMAN nature we are talking about here. This is not a privilege, it is as much a right as the air we breathe.

I was looked after by a friend. Not a stranger, who cared only about statistics and legal issues, and getting my baby out in time for him to play golf Saturday morning. I was cared for by a woman who I could call, day or night, and express my concerns, cry, laugh, and chatter. A woman who would do ANYTHING within her power to make me happy and safe, and to make my baby happy and safe. The Government, on the other hand, appears to have different motives.

You CANNOT take my RIGHT to have a home birth away from me. If you do, I will have no more children.
And I will fight, every day, for the rest of my life, for every Australian woman's RIGHT TO CHOOSE!!!!

Yours sincerely

Carly Zandstra