

18/07/09
Nicole Johns

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 find it a little disgraceful that Australia would even consider going in a reverse direction with our healthcare. Homebirths have been an accepted birthing procedure here in Australia and other leading nations for decades. Have we taken the time to consider what affect hospital-only birth will have on our already understaffed hospitals?

People who choose to give birth at home will now have to do so without assistance. This will indefinitely result in an increase in infant mortality rate and birthing complications.

Have we seen the statistics showing how homebirths compare to hospital births?
I'm really struggling to see the logic behind these bills and think it will be a very sad day in Australia if these bills are passed.

Yours sincerely

Nicole Johns.