

19 July 2009  
Lisa Van Nunen

Senator Claire Moore  
Chair  
Senate Community Affairs – Legislation Committee

By E-mail: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto: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 wish to express my concern about the above Bills. These Bills enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for those midwives attending hospital births only.

This arrangement specifically excludes midwives who attend homebirth from professional indemnity and therefore prevents their registration and accreditation under Commonwealth legislation to regulate and accredit all health professionals.

As a consequence, Australian homebirthing families such as my own will be without professional medical care for the birth of their children.

I choose homebirth in order to access birthing options based on international clinical evidence, but unavailable to me in hospital, including privacy, drug-free pain management and continuity of care from a known midwife. The safety of homebirth with qualified and experienced professional midwifery care has been demonstrated in numerous large-scale international studies.

Requiring women to homebirth without professional medical care is an unsafe consequence of this legislation.

I ask that the Senate Community Affairs – Legislation Committee take steps to remedy this situation, either by including homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills, or by amending registration and accreditation legislation to allow midwives to continue to provide homebirth care without professional indemnity insurance until such insurance becomes available.

I further request that the Senate Community Affairs – Legislation Committee consider nations such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada and The Netherlands, all of which support the reproductive freedoms of women and fund registered homebirth midwives through national health schemes.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Van Nunen