

20/07/2009

Nigel Jones

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. This legislation 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.

It is not acceptable to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement, due to the following:

- Supported by registered experienced midwives, where risk factors have been monitored with one-to-one dedicated care throughout the pregnancy, homebirth is not only safe, but provides a superior level of support and care that for many parts of Australia is unavailable via the hospital system. **Why introduce legislative changes that risks people opting to birth at home without that support - because the safe alternative has been made illegal?**
- There are many precedents in other developed nations where governments support the homebirth option (United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand).
- Homebirths reduce demand on the hospital system. Why force a healthy woman who would rather have her baby at home to go to hospital?

This legislation is a **backward step** in an otherwise progressive sector of the health system. As a father I played a much more supportive and involved role in the homebirth of our daughter – this assisted with the important post-birth environment and support of the new mother.

I urge you to amend the proposed legislation to retain choice for women, and to keep up with other countries that recognise that homebirth with registered midwives is positive, safe and empowering, and most importantly, **legal**.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Jones