

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009  
Mrs Jaime Foti

Ms Claire Moore  
Chair  
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail:

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 homebirthed my 3<sup>rd</sup> child and it was a precious and wondrous experience that I feel very blessed to have had. The thought that women in my country - a free, democratic country with a health care system that SHOULD be an example to the rest of the world – could be denied the right to choose, like I did, to bring their child into the world with the support system that best caters for their family is not only unacceptable but downright insulting.

It is imperative that homebirth and the independent midwives that attend them remain an option not only for those women (and there are many) that have had traumatic hospital experiences, women who live in rural areas, women who want continuity of care but also for women who deserve the right to decide what happens to their bodies and that is EVERY Australian woman.

Please do whatever is required to reverse the direction in which this legislation is taking Australia and protect independent midwifery.

Yours sincerely

Jaime Foti