

Sarah Whyatt

19<sup>th</sup> July, 2009

Ms 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 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 removing a woman's right to choose where she will deliver her baby.

Furthermore, it 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.

Earlier this year I was present in a supporting role at my sister's birth of her second child at home. The midwives present were exceptional. Their experience and knowledge was second to none. They facilitated a smooth, calm and safe delivery of my nephew into the world in an environment where my sister and her husband felt at ease. The experience was an extremely positive one. Most importantly, my sister and her husband were able to bring their baby in to the world where they wanted to, in their home, because they had freedom to choose a homebirth supported by midwives.

Please don't remove the right of parents to choose where they deliver their baby.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Whyatt