

13<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Mrs Jane Reynolds

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 am a mother of five young children, three of whom were born at home. I am writing to express my deep concern that these bills will impede a woman's right to choose homebirth.

I have had two hospital births and three home births. All five were complication free vaginal births. However, the difference in the experience was astounding. I was alone for most of my two hospital births, I was coerced into pain relief I didn't need or want, and ended up with unnecessary and unwanted intervention. By contrast my three homebirths were beautiful, gentle, uninterrupted ecstatic births where all three little people were born into water surrounded by family. I had the continued support of my midwife throughout the pregnancies and births. It has now been more than seven years since my first homebirth and I am still in contact with my midwife from that birth. In contrast I cannot even remember the names of the hospital staff that attended my two hospital births.

The right to choose how and where to birth is vital to the wellbeing of mothers and babies in this country. Women who desire an elective cesarean section are able to make this decision, women who wish to have particular pain relief are thankfully able to access this, but yet women who choose to birth with trained and expert caregivers in their own homes are going to be forced into hospitals, or to birth without any trained professionals to assist them.

There is overwhelming evidence that demonstrates the safety of homebirth for both mother and baby. One recent study involved over half a million women and found conclusively that homebirth was at least as safe as birthing in a hospital. (Source: [de Jonge A, et al. Perinatal mortality and morbidity in a nationwide cohort of 529,688 low-risk planned home and hospital births. British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology 2009; DOI: 10.1111/j.1471-0528.2009.02175.x]).

Many countries around the world, including the UK, Holland and most of

Scandinavia offer wide access to community-based homebirth programs and offer subsidies to families who birth at home, as they free up hospital resources for the sick. I feel frustrated and disappointed that Australia is moving in the opposite direction, contrary to international trend and scientific evidence.

I urge you to consider the rights and safety of all mothers and babies who have and will continue to choose to birth at home, as well as the Midwives who are ready, willing and able to support them in their choices.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely

Jane Reynolds