

Katherine Mingin

20th July 2009

c/- 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)

**Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills**

Dear Senators

I am a mother of 4 and live in a rural community situated 50km inland from Bundaberg. I wish to add my voice of concern regarding 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, but it is with great disappointment and distress that I find the future of homebirth, as an option not only for myself but for my daughters and sons, to be under threat. It is not acceptable 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.

To have the ability to make an informed choice in any area of my life is of utmost importance to me, and I generally take this to be a given in today's Australian society. To contemplate that this right of choice, in how I may birth, will not exist after the 1st July 2010 is at the moment beyond comprehension for me.

The intersection of the above legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I sincerely hope 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.

As for my background, I am a registered health professional (pharmacist) having trained and worked in the public hospital system for more than 10 years. I draw on extensive past experience and am well aware of the limitations of care in the public hospital arena. I have also birthed four babies, the first in a public hospital setting and the other three at home under the care of a competent private practice midwife. I am well qualified to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of birthing options, and value that the choice is mine to make.

I certainly view the current draft legislation as being a backward step, and will not find it acceptable if this government fails to find alternatives and solutions which would otherwise enable Australian families to make an informed choice.

Please show that you are committed to maintaining the standards of provision of quality care, in a way which will be equitable to all Australian women and their partners. I have deep concerns which echo the findings of Coroner Nicholas Reimer. That unless a way is found to support the provision of legitimate homebirth care, and the competency in providing it, the outcome will be dangerous.

There are many positives to be found in the homebirth model of care. Rural women such as myself already face many challenges with the reduction in services available. Don't let this legislation isolate rural women even further.

It is my right, as an informed woman in our Australian society, to be able to choose to birth at home, with a competent practising professional midwife.

Please ensure that this right is not removed as a result of the current draft legislation before you.

With sincere regards,

Katherine Mingin