

13<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Jill Kawalilak

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 writing to express my deep concern that these bills will impede a woman's right to choose homebirth.

From a mother's perspective, I support women in their choice as to where to birth their babies, either in a hospital or similar, or at home. I have two daughters, both born in hospital. Following my experience with my first baby, I resolved to have my second baby at home. Unfortunately, the placenta was not in the best position and I opted for a hospital birth just to be on the safe side. Our second daughter was born about 20 minutes after I checked into hospital and once her health and mine had been established, we checked out and were home with our beautiful new baby in less than three hours. It was wonderful to welcome home our two year old daughter in the morning and introduce her to her new little sister. There is way more to birth than having a baby.

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

Jill Kawalilak