

19th July, 2009
Sue Power and family,

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: 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 deep concern about the above bills. I understand what these bills will mean for Midwives gaining access to Medicare funding and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme as well as the professional indemnity premium support for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospital. But herein lies my concern...**that the policy makers have chosen not to support independent midwifery in this country.**

I am completely overwhelmed as I sit here trying to put into words my feelings about this. I am a woman and a mother of two beautiful children. I am also a midwife in the current maternity system we have. I struggle at work to come to terms with how we are teaching our student midwives to fear and over-medicalise birth. I struggle as a witness to the rising interventions, the interference in normal birth and to see its effect on women. And I wonder how that effect unfolds after my day at work has finished, how those women deal with the emotional aftermath, so little of which is understood or accepted, how they are supported once they go home to continue to understand that process of birth and to continue to love and nurture their children as they grow.

The lack of foresight that the ripple effect of birth and those early years of parenting has on our future generations frightens me. I wonder what birth will be when my son and daughter decide to have children. What choices they will have. So many things run through my head and it all starts with at the beginning...birth.

We have a unique opportunity to nurture and support our mothers and mothers to be. To improve our birth outcomes not only just by improving those numbers and statistics, but the things that can't be measured like the emotional outcomes.

These new bills bring many great new changes and I support those. But as a woman who has had two children, one through a hospital that provided one to one midwifery care and the other with the one to one midwifery care at home I feel blessed to have had such amazing and life changing experiences, but also to have had the choice of choosing to birth our second child at home. To be able to do this was a huge financial dilemma for us and almost didn't happen purely because of finances.

I feel because we who birth at home are less than 2% of the population we are a voice not worthy of recognition by the policy makers. However I know this rate would be so much higher if it didn't come down to a financial decision. Countries like New Zealand and the Netherlands (who have 30% home birth rate) support these choices, and as a consequence more women choose birth at home with a known carer as a choice.

I don't feel I can say much more. Writing this feels like almost a waste of time as I feel the powers that be have too much vested interest to let these changes occur.

But I feel that I must put my voice there with the others who feel so passionate and strong about these changes. And I really DO hope that we are listened to and not just brushed under the carpet.

I ask you to please support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Yours sincerely

Sue Power
(and my family....K Ryan, Finian Ryan and Nell Ryan)