Submission by to Senate Committee Inquiry into -Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 Midwives Professional Indemnity (Commonwealth Contribution) Scheme Bill 2009 Midwife Professional Indemnity (Run-off Cover Support Payment) Bill 2009

I would be opposed to the passing of the above mentioned Bills for the following reasons-

1.These Bills would restrict choice for pregnant women in Australia regarding where and how they give birth

Under these Bills it would be impossible for the majority of Australian women to choose a homebirth. I feel all women should be able to choose how and where they give birth (within medical limits), and that our Government should support them in this.

2. Restricting homebirth does not make sense

Homebirth is not unsafe. Many studies have proven this. Homebirth is not safe for some women and experienced, private practice midwives would not offer homebirths to these women for their own sakes and for the sake of mother and baby. I feel that outlawing homebirth is a decision that has been made to appease obstetricians, rather than a scientific or financial decision. Financially would it really cost that much more to provide insurance to homebirth midwives? Studies have shown homebirth for 'low-risk' women to be as safe as (or safer) than hospital births, so I can see no medical basis for stopping homebirths. To stop homebirths would be a decision that just would not make sense.

3.Passing these Bills could eventually lead to the extinction of homebirth within Australia

I feel that homebirth is something that once it's levels start to decline, they could decline very quickly. By restricting access to homebirth and making it less common, fewer women would be sharing their experience of homebirth and it would be perceived as even more risky and weird than it already is. A summary of one of the Bills states that the Government will contract an insurer to provide insurance to 'certain' midwives and that " in doing so it will require the contracted insurer to develop and maintain a database that the wider insurance market will be able to use in developing longer term products." If homebirth midwives are effectively 'removed from the game' at this stage, what hope do they have of ever getting back in? No (or few) homebirths equals no data, which equals no future for homebirths. While some people may see this as no great loss, thousands of Australian women would be angered and disappointed by this. All women should have a choice in how they give birth and I would hate to see this right taken away from future generations.

4. Not giving insurance to private practice midwives is insulting to midwives.

Restricting midwives to working within the hospital system gives the notion that midwives are merely assistants to doctors rather than professionals in their own right. It does not allow them to work at their full capacity. Some midwives are trained to do homebirths, some midwives want to do homebirths and some women want homebirths. This should continue to be allowed to happen in Australia, especially as there is no medical reason to stop homebirths.

5. From a personal point of view I am a passionate supporter of homebirth

I attempted a homebirth for the birth of our first child 5 years ago and had a homebirth for the birth of our second child 3 years ago. My main reason for this was that I believe for most women birth can be a normal, natural process, not a medical event. As such I didn't believe I needed to be in hospital to give birth. I felt confident that my homebirth midwives could deal with any situation that arose. Of course a slight risk still remained, but there is a slight risk involved in many everyday activities. With my second child's birth I was in a situation where it seemed as if I would not be able to find a homebirth midwife and have a homebirth. I understand the anguish a pregnant woman faces when she feels she may not be able to give birth how she wants. No-one attempts to deny elective caesareans to woman who choose that option so why should women be denied homebirth. I am angered by these Bills as they would take away choice from women. Even my partner and parents, who were initially very oppossed to my homebirths, cannot believe that the choice could soon be taken away from women who want to homebirth.