

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Dear Senator Moore

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

I wish to bring to the Senate's attention the potential for the above legislation, in combination with the *National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Doctors and Other Health Workers*, to result in the loss of access to homebirth attended by a qualified health professional for Australian women. In particular, these legislations will affect women who wish to birth at home with the services of a midwife in private practice as they make it impossible for registered midwives to attend homebirth without indemnity insurance and simultaneously deny privately practicing midwives indemnity insurance.

At present the majority of women accessing professional care for homebirth do so through private midwifery for the following reasons.

- Publicly funded homebirth services are unavailable to the majority of women who desire homebirth and this will continue to be the case into the foreseeable future.
- Privately practising midwives are the most experienced, and most skilled, maternity health professionals providing homebirth care.
- Privately insured women want private maternity care of their choice, whether midwifery, obstetric or GP. What reason other than private care and choice of carer is there for paying for private health insurance?
- Midwives, in particular privately practicing midwives, achieve high rates of positive spontaneous vaginal births.
- Many women prefer midwives because the profession is predominantly female and there is an equal, collaborative relationship achieved between mother and midwife that preserves women's autonomy and dignity.

Following extensive research and observations of birthing women's (negative) experiences while working as a physiotherapist in public hospitals, my three children were all born under the care of private midwives. Two were born at home and one baby was born in hospital following a non-urgent transfer for a slow labour. These positive experiences were possible because of the goodwill and mutual respect between myself, the midwife caring for me and the medical and midwifery staff of the referral hospital. I found this form of care to be profoundly positive.

The combined effect of the aforementioned legislations will not improve safety and quality of maternity services, instead it risks denying women professional care during homebirth increasing the risk of death and injury for mothers and babies

I cannot properly articulate the profound importance of homebirth to those of us who have experienced it. I can say with confidence that women will continue to birth at home. Please amend the legislation to include indemnity insurance for midwives

providing intrapartum care in the home so that women who do birth at home have the safety of the care of a registered and skilled midwife.

Yours Sincerely
Carol Chapman