

19th July 2009

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.

As a registered midwife with over 20 years experience in both the hospital and home setting I am extremely concerned about the National Health Registration Legislation that will prevent midwives providing homebirth to register and thus make their practice unlawful.

All the current recommendations around birth are that women are entitled to choice. I currently live and work on the far north coast of NSW which has one of the highest proportions of homebirths in NSW and there is not a lot of choice available for women in this area. Since I moved to this area 7 years ago I have attended about 30 homebirths. It has not been my preferred option to do this sort of work without indemnity insurance, but felt that these women deserved the right to choose where and how they gave birth to their babies and definitely deserved the right to have an experienced midwife, to support them at home, and arrange for timely transfer to hospital if required.

My concern is that if women are unable to access experienced and competent midwives to support them at home, a proportion of women will choose to birth at home without an experienced midwife in attendance which potentially puts both mothers and babies at more risk.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and insurance protection, so please make amendments to the proposed bills to include midwives caring for women at home.

Yours Sincerely
Susan Harrison RM