

Lyn Livingstone

10<sup>th</sup> July 2009

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 write to express my concern about the above bills.

I reside in a geographically isolated country town. It would take one and a half hours, in labour, for women living in our outlying communities to travel to Coffs Harbour Base Hospital hence many local women choose homebirth to avoid a long and stressful journey down the winding mountain road to access Coffs Harbour. Another issue to consider for Dorrigo residents is the amount of floods we experience. We have had three major floods within a four month period which has resulted in closure of the mountain road for several days due to landslides and waterfalls across the road. With these roads closed we are isolated, there is nowhere to go and no way, other than Westpac helicopter, to access Coffs Harbour hospital. All this only adds unnecessary trauma for mother and baby when a qualified midwife could assist with the homebirth in a calm and nurturing environment.

I understand that the above bills will enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospital.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is not acceptable however to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

All consumers should be treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection. We do not want to take a step back to the archaic days of witch hunts which could result in the persecution and burning of midwives at the stake!

Yours sincerely

*Lyn Livingstone*