

11th July 2009
Susan Ramanee Cookson

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 concern about the above bills. I understand that if these bills are passed into legislation in their current form they will not provide funding or indemnity for homebirth midwives.

The United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand are four nations moving forward in their maternity care system. They all support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund homebirth through their national health scheme.

Australia is proposing a major retrograde and flawed step by excluding homebirth from Medicare funding and access to professional indemnity insurance.

I am a homebirth midwife with over 27 years experience in homebirth. I gave birth to my four children at home. I have assisted many hundreds of Australian families give birth safely in the intimacy of their own homes, primarily in rural Australia. Homebirth can and does work. Just ask us. Listen to the women.

It is not difficult to access a caesarean section in Australia. Your proposed legislation will make it illegal to access sacred, safe and unquestioningly satisfying births at home with passionate and appropriately trained midwives.

Homebirth women and midwives may be a minority of the Australian birthing population but all women have the right to be treated equally with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection, and all midwives have the right to practice in all settings. Homebirth is proven by research to be safe and removing birth choices is a violation of our basic human rights.

Please do not force my practice underground. Please do not force women to birth without midwives.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Ramanee Cookson