

11 July 2009

Melinda Toms

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 understand that these 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.

Homebirth was not an option for me. After an emergency caesarean, I had to travel two hours from home just for the opportunity to try a VBAC for my second child. I was determined and successful which has made me equally determined to ensure that the homebirth option is available for all women in the future. My daughter-in-laws and nieces should have the option to birth at home with the safety and security of a registered midwife.

More and more we are trying to bring the 'at home' feel to our hospitals and birth centers so it makes perfect sense for healthy women to have the option of a normal birth in the comfort of their own home.

On July 4<sup>th</sup> I took part in the Maternity Coalitions nation day of action here in Stanthorpe. Support for women's and family's rights to choose home as a birth option came from a wide cross-section of our community.

Please respect our rights and those of future generations by ensuring all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Yours sincerely

Melinda Toms