

July 12<sup>th</sup> 2009  
Mr. P and Mrs. M Valente

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**

We write to express our concern about the above bills. We 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. It would be extremely discriminatory for home birth to be excluded from the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and related Bills.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. We 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.

We support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

We are the proud parents of two healthy children, both of whom were serenely and safely born in the bath at home, with two highly knowledgeable and experienced midwives present. If the bill is adopted without the appropriate amendments, we will be unable to enjoy this experience with our next child.

Under this legislation our only option to have a homebirth will be without the assistance of an experienced midwife, as having a midwife present will incur substantial penalties. Please note that proceeding to have a homebirth without the presence of a midwife incurs a high risk.

Australia is not a third world country. It is a country where Australian women are well educated, well nourished and very healthy. Do not deny them the choice of home birth. It is imperative that Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and Professional indemnity premium support be available to ALL midwives whether in hospital or private practice.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Paul Valente and Mrs. Maja Valente