Dear Senator Moore

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills.

These bills effectively will make homebirth illegal after July 2010. The national registration and accreditation of health professionals, states that "Practitioners will be required to have suitable professional indemnity insurance during the period of their registration." However, independent midwives like the midwife who attended the birth of my daughter cannot gain professional indemnity insurance (as it is not available for such a small group) and would therefore not be able to work in this capacity. It would be illegal for me to have a homebirth with a qualified independent midwife in attendance.

This regulation is essentially discriminatory against both the Australian women who chose to birth at home with a midwife and the independent midwives who attend these births. Australia is sadly lagging behind nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand who 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.

My husband and I paid for the services of a midwife entirely on our own without any government assistance. My daughter was born at home with little fuss and into a safe and welcoming environment at no expense to the government. My next birth may not be so straightforward. Is this what the new regulation system was intending? To force women to birth in places they don't want to? To prevent Australian women from having access to premium health care? To prevent trained, experienced and passionate midwives from practicing independently with the women and families who choose their service?

Action needs to be taken to prevent homebirth from becoming illegal. We need to keep this choice alive now, so we can work on it even more in the future to continue to improve outcomes for women and babies.

Yours faithfully

Laura Wakamatsu