

carol jamson

10th July 2009

Ms Claire Moore

Chair

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Dear Senator Moore

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

I am writing to express my outrage that Homebirth midwives are not to be included in the proposed bills.

I understand that these bills will enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and Professional Indemnity Insurance for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospitals and birth centres only.

This reform is well overdue, enabling women to choose a model of care that is continual for their pregnancies, births and postnatally. However, by not including homebirth in this reform, another choice for women is being denied. This is discrimination towards a small, but very important sector of our community.

In 1994, I chose to have a homebirth for my second daughter. My first daughter was born at our local hospital. My first birth experience was such a traumatic and disempowering experience due to very little support from the medical staff that I chose to have my next baby at home with a qualified midwife. The care I received from her throughout my pregnancy, the birth and postnatally far outweighed the care I had received prior with an obstetrics GP. I birthed my second daughter in a birthing pool in my lounge room at home, surrounded by candles and beautiful music, with my family supporting me. There is a notation on the floor marking where my daughter was born. My midwife was amazing

and the birth, I can only describe as the most wonderfully empowering experience of my life. I am sure you will read many submissions from women saying the same thing, birthing our babies at home with a qualified midwife, is the most empowering experience for women and their families.

By not including homebirth midwives in these bills you are effectively denying women the right to choose to birth at home safely. As it is a requirement of the National Registration Board (effective July 2010) that all midwives have indemnity insurance to be registered. Therefore, homebirth midwives will not be able to access registration.

There will always be a percentage of women who will choose to birth away from the hospital system, in their own homes, for reasons such as – location, previous traumatic experience, fear of hospitals, religious reasons, mistrust of ‘medical’ profession or to choose to be in control of their birth experience to name a few.

If homebirth becomes illegal, an ‘underground’ birthing movement will be created which will be dangerous for mothers and babies, as women will choose to birth without a registered, qualified midwife. Even more disturbing, is that if a midwife attends a home birth, she could be fined. Back to the ‘Dark Ages’ don’t you think!

Countries such as United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the United Kingdom women have a legislative right to choose homebirth. Come on Australia, step up and let us join our Commonwealth sisters.

There needs to be freedom of choice, and by not including Homebirth Midwives in this Health Legislation Amendment, the Australian Government is being discriminative and is taking away a Freedom of Choice for women. That is not DEMOCRACY.

I support a system where all consumers and caregivers are treated equally and look forward to that being the case.

Yours faithfully

Carol Jamson.