

11 July 2009
Johanna Pemberton

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 proposed legislation. I fully approve of the intention to provide Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for hospital-based midwives. However, if the Bills are passed in their current form, homebirth midwives will be excluded from funding and indemnity gains. Without indemnity insurance homebirth midwives will be prevented from registering under the proposed National Health Registration and Accreditation Scheme and their practices will effectively be made unlawful.

In April 2008, I gave birth to my first child. It was a homebirth attended by two private practice midwives. My husband and I were drawn to a less institutionalised birth, with a greater continuity of pre-to-postpartum care, and lower rates of intervention.

Should my next pregnancy prove to be of equally low risk, I would choose another homebirth under the supervision of qualified professionals. Rather than being criminalised by July 2010, I hope that homebirth can be better integrated into the Australian healthcare system.

Nations such as the 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 U.K. women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

I support a healthcare system where all parties are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection. I value the right to make an informed choice; I value access to less medicalised / more women and child centred birthing options.

Yours sincerely

Johanna Pemberton