

15<sup>th</sup> July ,2009  
Nicole Ann Foder

Ms Claire Moore  
Chair  
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

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

I write to express my disbelief and 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.

Yet my deep concern is in regards to the fact that homebirth, with an independent, registered midwife is to be excluded from this bill, and due to the lack of public indemnity insurance for independent midwives, this bill will make homebirth illegal.

As a mother of one and recently graduated with a Masters in Science (Midwifery) at the age of 45 years, I returned to study, to enable myself to practice as a homebirth midwife offering antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care

The reason being is that I have been a registered nurse for 28 years, a prenatal and postnatal supporter for 14 years and the women who wish to have a known midwife to birth their babies in a place of their choice, voiced their need for this service to be provided. They have a right as consumers to be offered this service and have found it difficult to access this service in Australia as compared to the other countries across the world, where all womens rights are supported. .

I have recently returned from practicing as a midwife, in the hospital system, out in the Riverina, NSW, where the women in the country cannot access homebirths or their own midwife. In the 5 month period I was practising, the women often discussed their desire to have their own midwife and a homebirth outside of hospital policies and medical interventions. They desired to take responsibility for their births, babies and families. Yet with no professional indemnity insurance many midwives who would offer such a service will not.

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.

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

14 years ago I was able to employ my own independent midwife who cared for me and my husband throughout the pregnancy, birth and who prepared us for parenthood. I had a midwife of my own choice, whom I trusted and felt safe with. This choice was researched at great length and modelled on the Netherlands successful care of the pregnant women.

All of the senate enquiries over the last 14 years support women centred care, support the need for parents to be educated and prepared for parenthood and that the lower, the stress levels of both parents and families, has been proven to have a positive effect on babies and young children development, physically, emotionally and mentally.

Hence the need for this care to be continued to be offered.

Only with an amendment to this bill can all women be offered this choice.  
In gratitude for your time, and support for all women.

Yours sincerely  
Nicole Ann Foder