

15<sup>th</sup> July

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**

I write to express my concern and distress 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. 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. I took advantage of this right in 2006 and 2007, I had no idea that when I moved to Australia with my Australian partner in 2008 that this right would be taken away from us and our future children. It has been a huge shock.

**I gave birth to my second son at home in the UK in 2007, it was well planned, well researched and went very smoothly. We are not new age hippies, we are not alternative in any way, we just felt that as conception and pregnancy are natural processes, we should continue with the birth that way at home. At every stage my midwife monitored myself and the baby for any signs of danger, and I would have transferred to hospital if anything had occurred.**

**I believe that Private Midwives are well trained, the same as hospital based midwives and just as competent to monitor and deliver babies at home, as in hospital – they are, and always have been the experts in normal birth. I am really struggling to see why these professionals are being penalised and outlawed.**

**I truly believe that if these bills are passed then many mothers will be forced to have a homebirth without a midwife, or with an unsuitably qualified birth helper. This is unacceptable, we are not in medieval England where a local lady delivered babies – we are giving birth in Australia – where I am continually being told that you have one of the best healthcare systems in the world. Take a look at Europe please, as mentioned above many countries are realising the benefits of homebirth; they are safer to mother and baby, and they are cheaper to the Government – it is a win/win situation. To exclude homebirth from this bill is a massive step backwards, and one you will inevitably have to reverse as more and more women demand equality with the rest of the Western world.**

I support a system where all families are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection. A mother can choose to have an elective c-section, with all the costs that this entails, but a mother cannot choose to have a normal birth at home with midwives in

attendance, that to me shows something about the maternity system is going very badly wrong. As every mother should have a full range of choice, it is always her body and her baby.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Jefferson

(mother of two sons, and resident of rural NSW)