

15<sup>th</sup> July 2009

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 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.

I am a mother of two daughters both born in hospital. My first baby was born in hospital and although the birth was uncomplicated I felt alone and that my care was unnecessarily medicalised. For the birth of my second daughter I chose a private midwife and to birth at home. My pregnancy continued until I was overdue by the local hospitals guidelines (40 weeks + 10days) and my midwife duly directed me to hospital and I gave birth after an induction. The birth was straightforward and uncomplicated and I went home after 4 hours and was accompanied by my private midwife. This highlights that private midwives do practice according to the guidelines set by the Nurses and Midwives Board when pregnancy goes outside the realms of low risk. I am hoping to have another baby and do not want to go to hospital. My husband and I did not enjoy the medicalisation of our experience and therefore will be birthing at home. If the proposed legislation is put in place then I will have no option but to birth at home with no care provider. I will not risk my family home for a \$30,000 fine. I would not expect my private midwife to risk her assets if she attend me and possibly be fined \$30,000. We are law abiding citizens, we pay taxes, we own a home, we volunteer for our schools and our local community and we will be criminals if we choose to birth where many other women in similar countries to our own have the government endorsed right to birth – home.

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.

Yours sincerely  
Heidi Jones