

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.

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. It is totally unacceptable that women and their families are having their rights to choose to birth their babies at home without a registered midwife present. I chose to birth my first child at home at the age of 28. For me, there was no other choice. I only wanted a home birth for my baby and I had two qualified and registered midwives attend the natural and safe water birth of my son Ariel, who is now 6 years old. I am now 7 months pregnant with my second child and I am planning another home birth. For me and many other women and their families in my community, we have all chosen to birth our babies at home. For us, that has been a very important component to consciously creating what we believe to be the safest, most natural and enriching experience for our children's entry into the world.

It is an injustice and a breach of human rights to take away such an important decision for a birthing woman and her family. Birth has an enormous imprint on a child. The way we birth our babies and the way we are cared for whilst birthing our babies, impacts upon the mother, father and child for the rest of their lives. It is the most significant spiritual and physical, emotional and psychological event in our lives. This imprint needs to be consciously considered and well planned. To hand over responsibility to unknown care providers in an unnatural setting such as in a Hospital or a Birth Centre, is not appealing to every birthing woman.

Although we “Home Birthers” may only be a small percentage of the average birthing community, we are a growing community. More and more women and their families are becoming dissatisfied with their birthing experiences and are seeking alternatives to Hospital and Birth centre options. Please re-consider adding a supportive component to the bill which will allow us, the women, to have the right to make very carefully and well considered choices about how and where they birth their babies. We deserve to be included in the bill. Our babies deserve the opportunity to have safe and loving entries into the world. Allow us, the pregnant mothers, the option available for us to consciously choose to have a safe home birth with registered, professional, one on one midwifery support in the comfort and familiar nest of our homes.

Yours sincerely

Simone Michelle Toussaint