

16 July 2009

Shayla Razga

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 related Bills

As a public health professional, mother and a believer in women's birth rights, it is a profound concern that Australian women will no longer be able to choose a safe homebirth supported by an indemnified midwife.

The many positives of the aforementioned health are recognised as being a great leap forward for women's health support. Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for hospital midwives can be the beginning. Let all women experience the great benefits our health system can offer us – even in our own home!

The introduction of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. Was this the intended outcome? I ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

For my next pregnancy, I'd like to know that wherever I give birth, be it a hospital, birthing centre or in the safety of my own home; that the same midwifery support, benefits and indemnity arrangements would be available to me.

After the birth of my daughter in a lovely rural hospital, with over worked medical specialists, much of my labour and delivery was in the hands of a wonderful midwifery team. My appreciation of midwives is overwhelming and I will always cherish their warmth, encouragement and professional skill for the birth of my daughter. I just hope that my highly researched and informed decision to deliver my next child at home with the same midwifery support will come to fruition.

It is difficult to comprehend how my rights as an Australian, exclude what is best for me, my family and our health. The various nations already supporting the rights – and health outcomes of women, want to ensure women and babies have the best possible start to life. Is this not what the Australian Government and Health System want? And what the Health Legislation is trying to achieve?

On a national scale, the legislative right to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through would not only benefit me, but I am sure a significant number of Australian families, just as it benefits women of other countries.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding, the same insurance protection, but most importantly, I support a system which considers our rights. I urge you to consider our right to choose.

Yours sincerely

Shayla Razga