

16/7/09
Melissa Raine

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 two related Bills

I am writing to you concerning the Government's maternity reform agenda, specifically, about the possibility that these reforms might result in home births becoming illegal in Australia.

This would be a lamentable decision. I have not myself had a home birth, but I believe that it is crucial for women to have access to this option. International research has shown that this is not a dangerous option for uncomplicated pregnancies. Hospitals are overburdened, and fundamentally, childbirth is *not* an illness. There is simply no compelling reason to diminish women's controls over their own bodies when going through the highly emotional experience of giving birth.

Midwives are trained and accredited medical professionals; why are they being treated with such contempt? During my pregnancies and birth experiences, midwives were the ones who answered questions, boosted my confidence, and gave honest accounts of my options, before, during and after labour. My experience of midwives ranged from women employed in the public hospital system to private midwives running education and support classes, and student midwives assisting at births, along with discussions I had with their experienced mentors. Midwives offered a more far-reaching form of support than any doctor I encountered.

I am shocked at how ill-considered this potential ban on home birth is. Women do not need to be condescended to by having this choice taken away from them, when there is nothing intrinsically harmful about having a baby at home with the guidance of a qualified professional. I fervently hope that you will support women's rights by allowing them to make informed decisions about the conditions under which they give birth, and therefore provide midwives with the means to continue providing their expertise at home births.

Yours sincerely,
Melissa Raine