

15th July 2009

Attention: Senator Claire Moore & committee

Re: Submission for Health Legislation Amendment (midwives & nurse practitioners) Bill 2009

Dear Senator Claire Moore and committee,

I am writing as a matter of personal interest that the proposed new legislation regarding medicare reform for midwives be inclusive of homebirthing midwives. Currently the new legislation omits private practising midwives from being eligible for Professional Indemnity Insurance, forcing homebirthing in Australia to become "outlawed".

This decision concerns me greatly as I am currently pregnant with my first baby and am planning a homebirth with a wonderful homebirthing midwife in my local area. The decision to birth our baby at home is one that my husband and I take very seriously, and after much research we feel that this is the right choice for us. It is to our financial disadvantage to birth at home given that we will not receive ANY medicare rebates for this option, and we will be paying \$2500 to our midwife to provide us with her services, however, this is still our preferred option and we willingly accept it.

We are currently disadvantaged in regards to our birth choices as we live in rural Western Australia, which means that there are only 4 practising homebirth midwives in our local proximity, and the government funded "Community Midwifery Program" does not extend beyond the metropolitan area of Perth. We have limited hospital options available to us also. With the new legislation omitting homebirthing midwives from practising we will be even more disadvantaged given that our geographical location will force us to birth our babies further from home, and takes away our rights as Australian citizens to choose the birth we want for our family. Surely this issue is one of a human rights nature, forcing parents to either risk birthing their babies at home alone without the professional support of a midwife, or having to birth in a hospital setting which, in my opinion, can be a more stressful situation.

To date the rates of mortality, intervention, emotional wellbeing of the baby and mother and many other statistics are far greater in risk in hospital settings in Australia than homebirthing, which only serves to reiterate the importance of increasing the health systems support of homebirthing. By not allowing private practising midwives to be eligible for indemnity insurance, we will no doubt see an increase in poor birth outcomes such as mortality rates and complications to mother and baby, as many parents will still choose the option to birth at home, even without a midwife. I know personally that I would never choose to birth in a hospital setting unless absolutely necessary, so feel

threatened that the government has the ability to take away my security and options to choose how I birth my babies.

It seems that the Health Minister Nicola Roxon, is taking a step back for Australia's birthing community, in contrast to many developed nations that are becoming more "birth option friendly" such as the UK, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Canada. The high levels of successful birth outcomes associated with more choices for women in these countries is testimony to the fact that we need to give women more options to choose the birth they are most comfortable with, and provide the highest level of safe practise to them. This ensures not only the safety of mother and baby, but also impacts positively on the health care system, with practitioners of all levels working together as a team to ensure the improvement of maternal and infant health.

In conclusion, I will be greatly saddened by the decision to omit privately practising midwives from the new legislation for my own sake and the sake of my family, as I see homebirthing as a special and natural event with so much support and care from the midwife present, not only at the birth but throughout the pregnancy, and post partum, that contributes significantly to the wellbeing of the family as a whole. With this choice denied we are only serving to increase the risks involved in birthing, and take steps backwards in terms of Australia's health outcomes, as well as deny families of their basic human rights.

Yours Sincerely,

Pippa Broughton