

Victor von der Heyde

13<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Senator Claire Moore  
Chairperson  
Senate Community Affairs – Legislation Committee

Dear Senator Moore,

***Senate Community Affairs Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related bills***

I'm not a midwife, I've never had kids myself but I have been involved in homebirths in communities in the country in Northern NSW over the years where there is a strong resistance to regarding birth as a something that should be governed by doctors and performed in hospitals. My concern with the proposed legislation is that it will lead to more births at home in these communities without even the support of midwives. As I understand it the legislation would make it difficult or illegal for registered midwives to attend home births. I think this would place people more at risk and I think it is a retrograde step.

As I understand it, while the bills expand the role of midwives in the provision of maternity services, they exclude midwives who attend births at home. By excluding these midwives, the Government is effectively making attended homebirth illegal. This is because, under the proposed National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, due to be implemented in July 2010, any midwife who cannot obtain insurance cannot be registered. Laws in many states make it a criminal act for an unregistered midwife to attend a birth, and the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme also imposes a fine for doing so.

From what I've heard, in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada and other countries, homebirth is publicly funded and supported. This would seem to be a very sensible approach to take. I put it to you that supporting homebirth and ensuring that fully trained midwives are able to get insurance for their work at reasonable cost, are effective ways to reduce risks for women who are wary of going to hospital for birth.

Yours faithfully,

