

7 July 2009

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

**Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners)
Bill 2009 and two related Bills**

Dear Mr Humphreys,

I am writing as I am very concerned that one group of midwives in particular have been excluded from indemnity insurance assistance in these proposed bills. Whilst not many midwives work in private practice in Australia, they deserve assistance with insurance that they have been unable to access since 2002. This refusal to do so appears very discriminatory given the Federal Government has assisted medical practitioners gain indemnity insurance at a cost of almost one billion dollars to the taxpayer since 2002.

Even more concerning is that this indemnity insurance is now becoming a requirement for professional registration which should never be the case. A health professional should be registered based on their knowledge and ability to practice in the area of their registration. If assistance to gain indemnity insurance is not forthcoming then midwives practicing independently in the community must be excluded from this requirement for registration.

One more concern I have with regards to indemnity insurance and independent midwives is if they do gain insurance it may impact the scope of their practice. Independent midwives are so important to the community as they support informed women to birth how they wish and will support the pregnancies and births of women planning vaginal birth after caesarean (VBAC), those with twin pregnancy, breech babies amongst other variations in pregnancy where women are often refused options in hospital. This must not be the case and an informed woman deserves the care she chooses regardless of the 'risk' factors.

This affects me personally as my pregnancies for various reasons don't suit the one size fits all options of hospital. My first two pregnancies and births in hospitals were adequate but I realised that birth should be much more than adequate. I was very lucky to be in a position to be able to afford the care of an independent midwife for my third pregnancy and had an amazing, safe birth in the comfort of my own home with all my family present. I was well aware that my midwife did not have indemnity insurance and this did not factor in my decision to hire her.

This option must be available to all women who desire this kind of birth and anything less is an infringement on our right to autonomy of our reproductive health.

Kind Regards,

Samantha Gibson-Nielsen