

16 July 2009

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By Email: 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

As convenor of Birthrites: Healing After Caesarean Inc. (Birthrites) and as a mother who utilised the services of a midwife in private practice, I am writing to express my concern about the above Bills.

As a consequence of this legislation intersecting with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals, midwives in private practice will be prevented from registering. For many women, especially those with a previous caesarean section, this will eliminate their right to choose assisted homebirth, and they will no longer have access to continuity of care.

The philosophy upon which Birthrites was founded states:

Through knowledge we can make choices that lead to empowerment and healing through birth.

Many women who present to Birthrites for healing and support after a traumatic caesarean section require extensive support during subsequent pregnancies and births.

Midwives in private practice are able to offer this service.

Sometimes women are suffering post traumatic stress disorder, are frightened of hospitals and hold a lot of hostility towards the maternity system and the care providers they encountered. **For these women the only way they will utilise the services of a qualified professional is by contacting a midwife in private practice.**

This contact alone is sometimes enough to restore their faith in themselves and in the maternal health system, some women choose to birth with the independent midwife at home or at hospital, some find that the ability to choose gives them renewed strength and control and they feel content to then enter the maternal health system.

The key here is choice. She has consulted, she has gathered information and she has taken responsibility for her body and her baby. What a wonderful start to the lifelong relationship she will have with her child.

Under the new legislation the incredibly healing and joyous birth my family and I experienced with my son would be outlawed. I was cared for by a midwife in private practice and ultimately birthed my son at home; my previous two births were by caesarean section. The tremendous support my family and I received from our midwife must not be understated. The choices we made as a family were uniting and healing.

In choice there is dignity, power, healing and safety.

Yours sincerely

Amber Janowicz
Convenor
Birthrites: Healing After Caesarean Inc.