

Ms Claire Moore  
Chair  
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto: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 write to express my concern about the above bills. I understand that these bills will enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospital. Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is not acceptable however to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

**My birth experiences**

I found my first birth experience to be traumatic at Logan Hospital in 2001. I was alone with strangers who didn't care that I was terrified and vulnerable, who didn't stop to reassure me or explain things to me – they just did the procedures. I always refer to my first birth as a "typical cesarean" on the outside but inside I was an emotional mess. The hospital days were blurred, I was numb, in shock, detached and distant to my husband, family and friends. I felt so alone and it all felt so wrong. Wasn't the first birth of your child supposed to be filled with awe, wonder, love? I felt nothing. I no longer recognized myself. For months later we assumed that my angry and tearful outbursts and rage were just new parents adjusting. Luckily I happened to be a part of Jenny Gambles' PHd study and she reassured me that this really was not normal. I was displaying some symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder.

My relationship with my husband deteriorated and we desperately tried to hang on to what was left. We are still together but we went through hell and that first year of my baby's life was miserable. We went on to have a second child and this time we wanted a homebirth. There was no way I was going back to an environment where I knew no one. Our midwife was professional and made us aware of all safety issues and answered any questions we had. It was bliss for her to come to my home and do antenatal visits. Unfortunately I ended up transferring to hospital during labour and ended up with a repeat cesarean at Mater Hospital in 2004. The experience this time though was so very different. My midwife ensured that I knew what was going on at all stages at home and outlined and explained all the choices to me. I was listened to, I was respected and I was part of the birthing process.

The issues from my first birth still come up today. My husband and I have both been scarred. It has affected our choices to have more children. My husband feels deep pain when we talk about our first baby's year. I ran a voluntary support group for women who had

had traumatic birth experiences and the stories I have heard would break anyone's heart. Like me after a horrific birth experience they don't want to go back to a hospital. Make it safe for everyone – give all women a choice. I still find it baffling that other European countries – even New Zealand have amazing outcomes with homebirth yet we are still backwards in our fears and thoughts about homebirth. Isn't it time we caught up with the rest of the world and let the research and facts speak for themselves?

Yours sincerely

Ursula Yee