

Dear Senator,

Re: Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related bills

I recently gave birth at the Royal North Shore Hospital as part of their fantastic Group Midwife scheme. I deliberately chose midwife care over my private health insurance obstetrician care as I felt I would be best supported in my desire to have a natural birth. The quality of service I received there was exemplary and I am very pleased to see that this model has recently been approved to be rolled out to all hospitals.

As I had a great, uncomplicated, drug free birth, I was planning to have a homebirth for my next baby. I am horrified to discover that this is going to be made illegal by July 2010 as a result of the proposed National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. For a committee to see the enormous benefits of implementing a brilliant midwife system across public hospitals but then ban midwives from operating independently in homebirths seems completely incomprehensible. I can only assume there is a political motivation behind it.

As you may know, in the UK, New Zealand, Canada and The Netherlands, homebirth is publicly funded and supported. I know of many people in the UK who had homebirths, fully supported by their local hospital. In fact, many friends found that the NHS tried to persuade them to have one. No doubt the NHS appreciates the fact that, for low risk pregnancies, a home birth is better for the mother and baby and much cheaper for the system.

For homebirths to be made illegal in Australia seems to be an absurd situation in our modern democracy.

Birth is such an important experience for the woman and the baby. I hope you are able to review this proposed bill and make the changes necessary to provide us, Australian women, with the same Medicare support wherever we choose to give birth, and to enable midwives to obtain professional indemnity insurance to support us in this.

Yours sincerely,

Helena Mooney