

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: 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. It is my understanding that these bills exclude homebirth midwives from Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support. By doing this the bills will effectively outlaw homebirths assisted by midwives.

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

I gave birth to my son in 2006 at home on the Community Midwifery Program in Perth. I initially had the same fears and ignorance about birth as most first-time mothers. Through the excellent resource centre at Community Midwifery WA I was able to educate myself on normal physiology of birth and a range of pregnancy and birth information I found to be invaluable. I also attended workshops at CMWA which were far more informative and empowering than those offered by hospitals. The continuity of care I received from my assigned midwife allowed me to develop a trusting relationship with her and my wishes for birth was understood and respected.

My experience of childbirth in my home, in water and without intervention is one of the most powerful experiences in my life and the lives of those close to me who were present. By being able to birth my child in the most appropriate way for me, I felt the deep bonding with my child and euphoria one feels with high levels of oxytocin. My birth experience made early parenting easy and deeply satisfying. I know my experience would not be like this if I was forced to birth in a hospital.

Since my son's birth I've observed different birth experiences of women and how these experiences have affected their experience of motherhood and life in general. It is my observation that a well informed woman who is able to birth in the way most appropriate to her, is likely to have a significantly more positive birth and mothering experience. This is fundamentally important for the health and well-being of mother and child with far-reaching implications.

A hospital is not an appropriate place for me to give birth. Unless there is a medical issue I won't birth in a hospital. If the above bills become law I will still birth at home. I am too informed about birth to settle for anything less.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Schell