

July 29, 2009

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

The Midwives Alliance of North America is extremely concerned by the above mentioned bills in that they will provide malpractice insurance for Midwives who care for women who chose to birth in the Hospital as well as give access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, but will exclude homebirth midwives from this bill.

Scientific research from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and The Netherlands has consistently demonstrated that homebirth not only is just as safe as hospital birth for low risk women but incurs less cost, less morbidity from decreased interventions and increased client satisfaction as well as better long term health outcomes. In a country committed to decreasing health disparities among groups and committed to excellence and choice in maternal and infant health, we are shocked that you would consider discriminating against an entire group of individuals. Not only is homebirth a viable choice made by women who wish to birth safely and avoid unnecessary medical interventions, but it may be the only choice for women who live in rural and distant areas, as is the case in much of Australia.

In the U.S. we are increasingly recognizing the cost effectiveness of out of hospital birth as well as recognizing the need to protect normal birth among low risk women. The U.S. has pioneered the Direct Entry Midwife who attends specifically to out of hospital birth and is an expert in normal birth. We are aware that Australia has recently begun to recognize the value of the Direct Entry Midwife and has provided support for Nurse Midwives to practice outside of the hospital.

By denying universal coverage to midwives, you will be committing an act of blatant discrimination against women who would choose home birth and you would be disregarding evidence based care. Additionally, you will leave women unable to access skilled attendants for their out of hospital birth which will directly impact maternal and infant morbidity and mortality rates. We are alarmed at the risk this proposed legislation will mean to pregnant women who wish to birth outside of the hospital. We are also alarmed that you would propose to criminalise viable, cost effective and safe health care for mothers and babies.

We hope, as experts in normal birth and protectors of women's right to chose quality and evidence based care, you will reconsider this proposal and hold to the public's interest, health and well being.

Yours sincerely

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