

CARES-SA  
8 Hopkins Cres  
North Brighton SA 5048

Senator Claire Moore  
Chair Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Legislation

11 December 2009

By email: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Senator,

RE: INQUIRY INTO HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MIDWIVES AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS)  
BILL 2009 AND TWO RELATED BILLS

CARES-SA is a peer support group for women who are planning to, need to, or have experienced birth by caesarean. Most of our contact is from women planning their next birth after caesarean. Many are shocked to find their options for this birth are limited to say the least, and are even more shocked, and disappointed and angry, to find that it is entirely likely that their caesarean surgery may have been unnecessary. For at least those two reasons, we ask that the amendments are recommended against.

Vaginal Birth After Caesarean (VBAC) is not actively encouraged or supported in the hospital system or by obstetricians. Women want to know what the risks of VBAC might be, and what the risks of repeat caesarean section might be. We offer resources and contacts to help with this information gathering, and we help women find the right care giver for them. Many of them find themselves turning to a midwife in private practice, as someone who will advise them of any risks and then support whatever decisions they make. Women overwhelmingly, whether birthing by caesarean or vaginally at home or in hospital, tell us that they want to have a say in what happens, they want to have control over what is done to them, they want to understand why the midwife or doctor is doing what they are doing, and that they want respect for themselves, their bodies and their babies. Women planning a VBAC (as are women planning another birth after any previous traumatic birth experience) often need more emotional support and more time to talk in antenatal appointments, and can often need more support during labour and birth. Privately practicing midwives do offer this level of support and should be encouraged to continue.

The increasing rate of caesareans should be of concern to all of us, not just the birthing women themselves. We support many women through the painful realisation that with more woman centred care their surgery may have been avoided and to the understanding of the 'cascade of intervention' that often leads to the unnecessary surgery. Obviously we all acknowledge that sometimes caesarean birth saves the life of the mother and/or the baby, but we want others to understand the damage that unnecessary surgery does to many families. Not just physically and immediately, but in the days, weeks, months and even years following women are still telling us of the trauma they felt, of the pain in being separated from their baby, the desperation as they tried to establish breastfeeding when all seemed to be falling apart. And the grief of the loss of the experience they expected to have as a woman, of the birth and sometimes for the breastfeeding too when it is all too much.

CARES-SA urges the senate to consider carefully the changes they are making. They will impact on individual women in ways you might not even be able to begin to understand. If any members would like to take the time our website includes the personal stories of the women and can be viewed at [www.cares-sa.org.au](http://www.cares-sa.org.au) Women tell us they want to share these personal experiences so they can help others, and maybe it will give you some insight into our concerns.

Yours sincerely

Michelle How  
Secretary CARES-SA

Dr Kylie Booth BMBS, FRACGP  
Coordinator CARES-SA

CARES-SA is a non-profit, community support group working to promote caesarean awareness and information; educate and inform about the safety of vaginal birth after caesarean (VBAC); and provide support for women and families dealing with any issues surrounding caesarean birth.

Your membership or donation helps us to continue this work.

[www.cares-sa.org.au](http://www.cares-sa.org.au)