

From: Central Victorian Midwifery Group Practice

Date: Thursday December 10, 2009

TO: The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
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Dear Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Re: Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009, the Midwife Professional Indemnity (Run-off Cover Support Payment) Bill 2009, and the Midwife Professional Indemnity (Commonwealth Contribution) Scheme Bill 2009.

Central Victorian Midwifery Group Practice was established in March 2005 when there was a significant increase in demand for private midwifery services in Central Victoria. The practice consists of three registered midwives all who provide care within the full scope of midwifery practice guided by National Midwifery Guidelines for Consultation and Referral (Australian College of Midwives, 2nd Edition 2008).

For women choosing to birth at home midwifery care is provided in collaboration with the woman, her doctor, her midwife and with the local hospital where a back-up booking occurs. In most instances these collaborative arrangements work well with the woman engaging the services of a doctor of her choice (usually her General Practitioner). However there have been two instances where alternative medical care has been required. One when the woman's doctor refused to order post partum blood tests for an Rh -ve woman and authorise oxytocics drugs for the prevention of post partum haemorrhage. The other incident was when a woman's General Practitioner refused to support the woman's choice for homebirth and provide collaborative care.

Whilst we support collaboration we ask the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs to strongly oppose the amendments to the above Bills for the following reasons:

- The amendments to the legislation will give doctors medical veto over a midwife's scope of practice.
- The amendments put doctors rather than women at the centre of maternity care.
- The amendments will have a greater impact and be restricting on women living in rural areas.
- The amendments have the potential to remove choice of doctor for women seeking private midwifery care.
- Importantly it reverses the professionalism of a registered midwife back to the time when midwives were required to practice under the supervision of a medical practitioner (Nurses Act, State of Victoria 1993). This is contrary to the International Definition of a Midwife (International Confederation of Midwives 2005)

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