

5 December 2009

Simply Natural Therapies
41 Tunstall Square
Doncaster East
Vic 3109

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

Over the past four years at Simply Natural Therapies in East Doncaster in Melbourne, we have taught more than 400 mums-to-be how to prepare for a gentle, natural birth. The success of our HypnoBirthing classes has been quite overwhelming and we are rapidly becoming one of the biggest providers of this service in Australia.

Our mission is to empower women to safely manage their own birth experience. We teach relaxation, breathing techniques and self hypnosis. We have had wonderful feedback from parents, midwives and obstetricians as to the benefits of this program. We have seen first hand that a woman's body knows how to give birth safely and surprisingly comfortably when it's relaxed and free of fear.

We strongly oppose the proposed amendment to legislation that Midwives can only be registered and practice privately in collaboration with a Doctor. This legislation feeds the myth that pregnancy and childbirth are dangerous medical problems. Childbirth is not a medical event and to have an Obstetrician or Doctor required for all births is equivalent to having an Orthopedic Surgeon treating every skinned knee*, or a Gastroenterologist supervising every bowel movement!

According to the World Health Organisation the Caesarean rate should be 8%. This means 92% of births have the potential to be safely managed by a well prepared mother and a well trained midwife. Midwives are specialists in childbirth. Obstetricians are specialists in intervention. Midwives are trained to assess the need for that intervention and call in an Obstetrician if required.

From our experience, when women are free of fear, feel supported and can remain relaxed during birth, the need for intervention is dramatically reduced. Every woman deserves the right to choose the location and support people she feels most comfortable with, including the privacy and safety of her own home.

I personally had three babies in the 1980s at Melbourne's only Birth Centre. They were drug free, intervention free, empowering births. I saw an Obstetrician twice during each pregnancy for the rest I was cared for solely by midwives. This is surely a more sensible use of our overstretched hospital resources.

It's interesting to note that at the end of the second century AD, midwives, healers and wise women were executed and it was forbidden to attend a woman in childbirth. Women's rights must be protected and Midwives must be recognized for the highly trained professionals that they are,

Yours sincerely,

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*Ref "The Farmer and the Obstetrician" by Dr Michel Odent