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10 December 2009

TO: The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Legislative Committee
community.affairs.sen@alph.go.au

Dear Senate Community Affairs Committee,

Re: Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Midwife Professional Indemnity (Commonwealth Contribution) Scheme Bill 2009.

The proposed requirement for midwives to have “collaborative arrangements” with “one or more medical practitioners” before being eligible for professional indemnity insurance or Medicare rebates leads to a range of problems, as described by the Maternity Coalition.

- **Untenable consequences for professional regulation of midwifery.**
Medical control over “collaborative arrangements” gives doctors power to determine midwives access to insurance and consequently their ability to maintain their license to practice.
- **Anti-competitive influence on the health care service provision.**
One group of service providers will be able to control consumer access of another group of providers.
- **Difficulty in delivering intended access and choice for Australian women.**
Doctors have minimal incentives and significant disincentives to enter ‘collaborative arrangements’ with midwives, such as medico-legal risks, cultural resistance, and competition.
- **The amendments do not improve safety or continuity for Australian mothers.**
Midwifery is a regulated profession, with standards, codes of practice and guidelines which require appropriate collaboration.

We propose the following be addressed before the Medicare for Midwives Bills are passed:

- Remove any requirement for collaborative arrangements as a prerequisite for access to insurance eligibility or registration for private midwifery practice.
- Ensure that requirements for collaboration between midwives and doctors does not give one group veto or control over another.
- **Explicitly include and support collaborative relationships between midwives and hospitals**, not limited to individual doctors.

Kind regards,
Dr Rima Truchanas, Dr John Terry (Doctors of Chinese Medicine)
Dr Marg Peck, Dr Jayne Andrews (Doctors of Chiropractic)
Selina Wilson (Masseur) at the Healing Well.