



ACT

Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Dear Senators thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009*.

The ACT Branch of the Australian College of Midwives (ACM) welcomes the maternity services reform agenda; the amendment to the legislation is however causing us significant concerns. We believe this will jeopardise real change to truly increase access and equity for birthing women. Maternity reforms which increase care options for all women but particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women in rural and remote areas and disadvantaged women are much needed, especially as currently these women do not always receive optimal care. To promote optimal and equitable care collaborative arrangements must reside with maternity services and not individuals..

Continuity of midwifery care has been widely evidenced as being a safe model of maternity care. The proposed reforms will not increase either continuity of care or carers and may result in cost shifting between state and federal funding for maternity services.

The National Nursing and Midwifery Board is a current regulatory body. The ACT Branch of the ACM therefore seeks further clarification on the rationale behind creation of a de-facto regulatory process by doctors of midwives. The amendments put the ability of midwives to practice in the hands of doctors rather than the regulatory authority.

Other considerations of your enquiry:

Collaboration: It is disappointing to see that midwives will be mandated to collaborate when other maternity professionals do not. Within midwives' core competencies and code of ethics we are already expected to, and indeed welcome, collaboration with other care providers to ensure women receive the safest, most appropriate care.

Anti-competition: Currently the majority of antenatal care is provided by private medical practitioners (both GPs and obstetricians). We strongly disagree that midwives should be prevented from entering into competition with medical

professionals in providing the quality midwifery service that women are demanding. Evidence strongly supports midwifery care is safe and cost effective. It is hard not to draw the conclusion other providers are threatened by the possibility of competition to their practice by midwives.

Thank you again for the chance to submit to the enquiry and we look forward to the Committee's deliberations and the Enquiry outcomes.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Taylor', enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Dr Jan Taylor
President
Australian College of Midwives ACT

7th December 2009