

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

I write to express my concern about the above bills. I understand that these bills will enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospital.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is not acceptable however to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Having had a broad mix of birthing environments (1 birth centre, 1 hospital and 3 homebirths) I am very PRO- CHOICE regarding birthing options for families.

I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to birth some of our children at home, an environment that was calm and loving.

Home birth is not for everybody, but every Australian should have the right to choose a birthing environment that best serves their desires and needs.

Fundamentally I believe this is an issue of choice - Removing choices for low risk birthing women. For such a progressive nation, removing freedom to make informed choices seems to be a serious regression for our country. A disgrace!!!!!!

Yours sincerely

Dr Jennifer Barham- FLoreani