

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

I am concerned 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 (long overdue), but excludes independent midwives providing homebirth services.

I gave birth to my son at my sister's house in Wangaratta, in a planned homebirth. I had initially planned to give birth in hospital.

I wanted a natural birth, (intervention and drug free). Midwives, recommend that you stay at home for as long as possible, as labour progresses more smoothly when you are relaxed (which you are more likely to be when you are at home). I live 45 minutes from Wodonga, and had always been concerned about when I would go to hospital, not wishing to leave it too late. However, I understood that if I left too early, that the adrenalin rush could slow down labour, or even make it stop. So often, women in this position who have gone to hospital, and then had their labour slow down, are sent home to let it get going again, or offered drugs which will get it going artificially. And research shows, once labour is interfered with, more interference is necessary to get the woman (and baby) through.

So, wanting a natural, drug free birth, what were my realistic choices? In my view, I had little chance of a natural birth at hospital.

In the end I chose a homebirth, attended by 2 very experienced independent midwives (with years of homebirth and hospital births) at my sister-in-laws house in Wangaratta.

My birth was uneventful, although, had I been in hospital, the outcome would have been very different (confirmed to me by 2 practising hospital midwives). I "pushed" for 4 and 3/4 hours (with my baby being monitored carefully and showing no signs of distress). In hospital, they rarely let you get to 2 hours before "suggesting" that you need help (even without any signs of the baby being in distress). This would have involved an episiotomy and vacuum extraction at the very least. If that had not resulted in my baby being born, then a cesarean could have resulted. As it was, I pushed for over 4 hours and gave birth to my beautiful baby boy without tearing at all.

In my case, giving birth in hospital would have resulted in an unnecessary intervention.

I believe in the right of women to choose.

I am only one woman. I can only speak for myself.

You are involved in making a decision which will affect many women and babies.

Please find a way to allow independent midwives to help women give birth safely at home.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Titcumb