

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 home birth 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 home birth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose home birth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent home birth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include home birth 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.

I have personally given birth to all of my children at home with a privately employed midwife. Hospital is not an option for me to give birth at. I am due to have my fourth child in two weeks, and again have accessed a home birth midwife at my expense. We are not sure if we have completed our family with four children. If we decide to continue on with a fifth child, I will not have the option to employ a midwife to legally attend me at my home. This new legislation is unfair and biased towards the main model of care... women being forced into hospitals to birth. I for one will not birth in hospital ever, unless I need medical intervention.

It is disgusting that this Legislation has even been commenced, and come as far as it has. Home birth is the most empowering way for a woman to give birth. It should be made available to all women as an option to hospital birth. Home birth makes birth normal, avoids the unnecessary complications that arise from being under the hospital protocols, I believe that the first intervention in birth is leaving your own home.

I for one will find a way to birth at home with a midwife in secret - even if it means breaking the law. How dare you take away my right to birth where and with whom I choose in 2010 and beyond.

On behalf of myself, my daughters and my granddaughters, I make this submission that the future of birth in Australia can be an empowering, positive experience where and with whomever we women choose.

Yours faithfully

Sally-ann Patrick