

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 the choice to be able to choose to birth in the way that suits each individual woman the best, whether at home, birth centre or hospital ward, is the most fundamentally important choice we have for our own physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well being, not to mention that of our children, families and society as a whole. A birth where the woman has control over this choice will enable the woman to feel positive about the birth and this increases the chance of good bonding between mother and baby which can only be positive for society as a whole. For such a progressive nation, this change would be a huge shame and regressive step for us. It brings tears to my eyes to think that this could actually be a reality. Please consider amending the bills as explained above as women are entitled to this most basic life choice.

Thank you and yours sincerely

Nicole Wilson