

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.

A bill that takes away a persons right to choose where and how they give birth cannot be an improvement to the systems. This bill is taking Australia further into the wrong direction. Countries with this option and a natural, normal mentality towards birth have much lower incidence of birth trauma. We should be in line with them if not improving on that! The Australian government doesnt seem to be taking in to account the overwhelming evidence about safety, bonding and health concerns related to the medical intervention associated with birth. We have the ability to birth normally and without medications or interventions, and if something was to go wrong we should have the option of a trained independent midwife to help. Having a baby at home is not a dangerous option taking away their support is the dangerous option.

My vision for Australian birthing policies is one where women have access to support and can choose the environment that SUITS THEM not the government or medical association. ALL women should have the option to birth at home with a trained midwife and feel free to transfer to the hospital without feeling like a failure. She should not be made to feel like her decisions are less valid than the next. It should be what suits HER.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I hope that the government is able to see that the only reasonable option here is to allow trained independent midwives to attend homebirths, for the safety and protection of Australian mothers.

Yours sincerely

Jana Kingston