

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.

While the Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue, it is not acceptable to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is launching itself back into the dark ages as far as choice for birthing women is concerned. In Victoria, where I live, there are very few birth centres and no homebirth programs so the choice is public or private hospital. Neither option is palatable to women wanting to birth in their own space with their family present. After experiencing two amazing homebirths (and one hospital birth) I COULD not go back to hospital for an uncomplicated, normal pregnancy. I would be forced by this legislation to choose either an "underground" midwife or to freebirth. Neither of these choices are my preference, nor do they represent the ideal "gold standard" (one to one midwifery care) of antenatal and birth care.

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.

Homebirth is as safe as hospital birth and, in my experience, lead to better bonding, easier establishment of breastfeeding, less risk of post natal depression (due to the extra support available), an easier transition to motherhood and better sibling bonding.

For the future of all pregnant women and for my children, should they decide to have children of their own, I beg you not to send Australia down the path of making homebirth illegal and instead ensure each women's right to choose this safe method of birthing [homebirth] is protected.

Yours faithfully

Maree Cisera