

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.

One week ago I had my first homebirth after two private hospital births. The care I received from my midwife throughout pregnancy, my birth and the past week has been exceptional; by far superior to the private health care I received in my previous two births. My birth was the easiest, quickest, least painful and least physically traumatic of the three which I credit to being able to labour and birth at home with a competent, experienced birth professional in attendance.

Should I have a fourth baby in the future, I would definitely homebirth again. I have no desire to enter a hospital as a healthy woman with a healthy pregnancy and baby. The idea of being unable to have a midwife in attendance is not an acceptable option for me. Please help us keep the services of these amazing dedicated women alive in our communities.

Yours sincerely

Anna Russell