

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.

I am a person who planned a home birth for the delivery of my daughter this year. It was one of the most considered and valuable decisions I have ever made. It absolutely should continue to be an option for all families. It has more one-on-one care than a straight hospital option, more consistency of care and is totally safe, always with a back up plan if more intervention is required. When we did require more intervention, I felt completely safe with the transfer to hospital and after the birth we had so many of the hospital midwives admit that they wished they could be a midwife that offered deliveries at home too. Please do make the changes required to these bills so homebirth midwifery can continue.

Yours sincerely

Margie Crowther