

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.

My wife and I have been fortunate enough to experience the wonders of home birthing with both of our sons, one in Melbourne and the other in Perth. It became very apparent during the lead up to the births, during the birth and post-birth that this is the way nature intended it to be done. My wife's labour progressed smoothly and quickly as she was in the comfort of her own home and surrounded by people she chose to have present, not hospital staff. We couldn't imagine having any children in the future anywhere but in our own home with the aid of a fully qualified independent midwife and ask that you reconsider the pending decision to effectively make this practice illegal. We as a society have come so far with our efforts to treat women equally but introducing these bills will set us back, I believe, decades. The mother of an unborn child will always intuitively know what is best for her and her baby, please allow all women to continue choosing where they want their babies to be born.

Yours sincerely

Glenn Smethurst