

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.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is not acceptable however to exclude homebirth with an independent midwife 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, independent 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.

Early this year, I planned to have a midwife-attended homebirth. Unfortunately, during labour, some complications arose and I ended up with a caesarian section at hospital. As I had two midwives caring for me, at no stage was my health at risk. We calmly made the decision to transfer to hospital, and my baby was born about four hours later. My experience shows that even when "things go wrong" during a homebirth, the mother and her support team can collaborate with a hospital to ensure the safety of both mother and baby. However, in the vast majority of cases, this is not required.

If I were to have another child, I would like to plan another homebirth. I fear that this choice will soon be taken away from me, and I am appalled at this infringement upon my human rights to birth where I like, and to choose who will be in my birthing space.

Yours sincerely,

Jesse Vincent