

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 birthed my second son at home in January 2007. Had I attempted to transfer to hospital during labour I would have had him on the road as he came in 20 minutes. Either that or the contractions would have stopped just like they did when I transferred to hospital approaching full dilation for my first son's birth. I am so glad that second-time round I employed a wonderful trained, experienced, professional independent midwife by the name of Robyn Dempsey. I was looked after so wonderfully and professionally both before and after my son's birth and I will never return to the hospital model again. I do not deserve to be discriminated against because I choose to birth at home. There is no other choice for me as the last labour was so quick. By effectively outlawing independent midwifery with these bills, the government will be forcing me to labour and birth at home unsupported.

Yours faithfully,

Amber Burns