

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.

Since having my first child three years ago, I have learned much about various birthing options for women around the world. I have also had the opportunity to learn about homebirth, as five of my friends have made the choice to birth at home in the last two years. The positive reports and wonderful experiences of these women and their families have only proven to me that homebirth can be a safe and natural option that I believe all women in the world should be allowed to access.

I am now 39 weeks pregnant and it is mainly the high financial cost of arranging a secure and appropriate homebirth that has made my decision to birth in hospital. Next time I hope this is still an option for me, and that my decision will not be made for me by a new, yet unreasonable and unfounded law.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Petrou