

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.

As both a mother of 2 and midwife I strongly believe in the right of women to choose their place of birth and have access to qualified, regulated midwifery care regardless of where they choose to birth. Homebirth is my choice. To disallow this choice the Australian Government is not following evidence-based practice nor is it keeping up with other progressive nations on this issue.

It is often mentioned in this debate that the number of women choosing homebirth are small. This does not mean that it is not a valid choice. Many women are also limited in this choice due to the major obstacles midwives face who choose to practice in this way (no indemnity insurance, hostile hospital environment if transfer/consultation/referral necessary).

Please consider my voice in your deliberations on this issue.

Yours sincerely

Megan Hoy