

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

We are writing to you as concerned grandparents who live in rural QLD. We 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. We understand this will increase birth choices for rural women and their families which is a good thing.

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 unintended intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering and therefore practice. We 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.

We support a maternity system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Our daughter chose to birth at home with two qualified midwives for the birth of her second child. The care she received was exceptional. The whole family felt a part of the birthing process – something that doesn't happen in any other model of maternity care. We are deeply distressed that this option could be removed for our other daughters and our son, none of whom have currently started having children. We have seen first-hand the enormous benefits of birthing at home with a qualified midwife.

We should not be looking like we will LOSE an evidence-based option for families in this day and age, we should be seeing our Governments INCREASING options in line with international best practice and medical evidence.

Yours sincerely

Bill and Kerry Smethurst