

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.

My daughter was born at home last July. For her to enter the world in such a nurturing, safe and intimate environment was so very beautiful and memorable. Many women experience unnecessary interventions in a hospital situation, so avoid the struggle for an intervention free labour and birth at home was truly wonderful. The time immediately after our daughter was born was something we will remember forever. To be able to share that time, play some music and be at home in a familiar environment was great. Watching my partner give birth on her own terms was something I believe all women should have been able to choose. I hope our future children will be born at home also. Having a great labour and birth is crucial not only for mother and child, but I believe families and communities are affected also. Please have homebirth remain a choice for Australian women and families.

Yours sincerely

Nicolas Gilbert