

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

I am writing to express my deep concern over the proposed changes to the above bills, specifically those changes which directly affect independent midwives and potentially discriminate against those who choose to support women who birth at home.

Both my children were born at home under the care and supervision of an independent midwife. My midwife provided prenatal and postnatal care to the highest standard in my home, as well as delivering both my babies with the greatest care, support and professionalism. In both instances I had very positive outcomes, not without challenges, which most births involve, but I would have to say they stand in my life as two of the most empowering, transformative and inspiring experiences. I feel confident that my positive experiences would have been greatly diminished if I had been forced to birth in hospital, especially given I live in a semi rural area without access to a birthing centre.

I question how independent midwives will be able to afford to continue to practice if they are excluded from the proposed changes to Medicare funding and not potentially able to be paid properly for their services. As I am sure you are aware midwifery is a specialised field, requiring years of dedication. I know my midwife to be a very committed person who holds her work and professional responsibilities with the highest regard, showing each mother to be the care, respect and dedication to delivering her child, safely and in a way which honours the incredible process which being born is.

It seems that as a consequence of the above mentioned legislation in conjunction with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals, homebirth midwives will be prevented from registering. So I ask that you take immediate steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

I believe strongly in the rights of a healthy pregnant woman to be able to choose to have her child at home, in familiar surroundings and supported by those she trusts and feels safe with and in the care of an experienced and professionally trained midwife. I recognise that this is not every woman's choice and respect the right of each to choose the way which is appropriate for them, and that is what I feel needs to be respected: the equal opportunity to choose.

Yours sincerely,

Stephanie Gottlieb