

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 a 1st year midwifery student, going into this course I had great aspirations of one day perhaps practicing in home settings and practicing as an independent midwife to give women the option to birth in their homes in a safe, natural way. Furthermore, as a woman, I believe I should have the right to dictate what happens to my own body. I should have the freedom and power to bring my child, which has been growing inside me for the previous nine months, into the world in a way I see fit.

To take this option from women, is emotionally unsafe and potentially harmful as women who now face birth, who want to birth at home, won't have the medical support they need, and turn perhaps to 'free birthing'. That is, the act of delivering a child 'solo'. With no midwife, doctor, nurse or any kind of medical backup in case things go wrong.

With this in mind, the fact that this new legislation may be fatal to babies and women, the emotional repercussions from this, and the fact that women have had taken from them, their basic human rights, is deplorable.

I hope to practice in the future in a home setting. I know that the right choices will be made, and there will be no end of protest, until they are. This issue not only concerns my future career, my future as a mother, and as a woman. An emancipated, educated woman.

I urge you to act for all Australian women and change this legislation so every woman, has every choice. As is her right.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca L. Rooney