

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

My name is Miranda Reis and I am a mother of two young children (5 & 2 years old). Five years ago I was lucky enough to give birth to my daughter in a small Maternity Unit, in which I received one to one midwifery care both antenatally and postnatally. Three years later, when I became pregnant with my son I knew exactly what sort of care I wanted and returned to the same Maternity Unit for a second time. These wonderful experiences inspired me to become active in the Maternity Care area and subsequently for the past five years I have worked as a volunteer Consumer Representative on various Queensland Health committees, in this area. Through these experiences I have gained knowledge and insight into Maternity Care and have come to highly value practices in this area that enable: a woman's right to choice; access to care with a known midwife and giving birth in a safe and caring environment.

Today I write to you to express my concern about the above mentioned 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 and I believe will be a positive move in the direction of women receiving one to one midwifery care.

It is not acceptable however to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering; perhaps an unintended consequence. If homebirth midwives are not able to register, it is my belief that this will have a very negative effect on the quality of Maternity Care offered in Australia today. It will undermine the important practices that I have mentioned above; a woman's right to choice – to choose a home birth if she wishes to and to access care with a known midwife of her choice. And as history has repeatedly shown us prohibition does not stop people from doing what is prohibited. On the contrary it usually makes some people more extreme about it and then it takes place in an unsafe environment.

I am asking you to 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. A system that supports a woman's right to choice; access to care with a known midwife and giving birth in a safe and caring environment.

Yours sincerely

Miranda Reis