

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. 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 services and choices, and the same insurance protection.

I realize that women who choose to have a homebirth make up a small proportion of the birthing population. My daughter was born in the public hospital system and as a consequence of this birth experience, I have had no hesitation in choosing a homebirth for our second child due in November.

For the our first child's birth we employed an independent midwife to guide us through the hospital process and protocols, and inform us to make the best decision possible. She was also an advocate for our choices of a natural birth and an invaluable resource for myself and our family. It is terrifying to me that by process of legislation, midwives in private practice will soon be outlawed.

We live in a great country where we have the choice of so many things. It saddens me to think that I will soon be denied my choice to give birth in a safe, supported, caring and private environment.