

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.

I feel that this is of prime importance for all women and their partners to have the freedom to make an informed decision regarding their choice of birth - one of the most important moments in their life. We as consumers, have become used to questioning to reach a decision. In light of this, I don't understand why I won't be able to have the choice if I so choose.

We haven't started our family yet, but I would appreciate the full range of choices for the birth, including home birth. I believe that giving birth is one of the most natural rites in life, but it is becoming so medicalised and we are moving away from the wisdom of women passed through for generations.

We may end up choosing a hospital for birth with a strong midwifery led care, but I would rather had that option. It is like I choose to see naturopath rather than a GP, I would like to make an informed choice regarding my birthing options - and have the full range of options available.

Thank you for taking the submissions into account, and please consider that this is primarily a basic human right to be able to make our own choices. We do live in a free country afterall.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Smethurst

