

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.

As a midwife who currently works in a hospital I applaud the government for making these changes for the benefit of women. However I am ashamed that the government thinks it has the right to take away womens choice of where they want to birth.

As a mother I am one of the less than 1% (in Australia) of women who chose to have a home birth at my own expense. I was blessed to get to know my midwife throughout my pregnancy, knew that she was there for my labour and birth of my child and for the following six weeks for ongoing postnatal support to ensure I was able to breastfeed. If I have more children in the future I want this choice to be available to me preferably with medicare funding to assist with this cost.

The current changes in legislation are long overdue. However it is not acceptable to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. This combined with national registration requiring insurance to register will essentially mean that my midwife will be made illegal if attends homebirths after July 2010.

I have made a choice to birth at home with a midwife who is registered, qualified and an appropriate care giver for me. What right does the Government have to take this personal choice away from me. In the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand the rights of a women to choose home birth and fund a registered midwife through the National Health Scheme is supported by each Government. In New Zealand and the United Kingdom, all 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 look forward to a favourable outcome for all mothers, midwives and babies to be born

Kind regards
Nicole Utley

Midwife & Mother