

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 have delivered four babies in three different countries, two of them were born at home (USA, Belgium and Australia). I am shocked to hear about this new legislation in Australia. I think it is the right of the woman to choose the best way to deliver her baby. And it is the responsibility of the country to provide the best health care for these choices. Having a baby at home is a very safe option if it is carried out with the help of highly qualified midwives. Having no choice but to have a baby by yourself, is unacceptable. This legislation will only promote very unsafe births conditions for women. And it will make Australia look ridicule in front of the other western countries, whose legislation obviously allows such a basic right.

Yours sincerely

Manuela Vega Viera