

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.

Having experienced a hospital birth and a home birth, I feel that I am in a strong position to comment on the affects of this legislation. While the hospital birth provided a "successful outcome" it did so at greater monetary expense to the public and at greater personal cost to myself and my husband. We were largely alienated from the hospital process simply due to the nature of large scale public management.

The hospital provides a crucial service for some pregnancies and births, however in the large majority of cases a homebirth is a highly successful, safe, family enriching experience.

The fact that the World Health Organisation states that first births conducted in the home have the same success rate as hospital births and for second births the outcomes are in fact better to my mind makes this a non issue.

Homebirths are safe, family friendly and extremely cost effective and are in fact good public health policy.

Yours sincerely

Sarah (Sally) Cusack