

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.

As a mother myself, of a homebirth child, I resent the removal of my right to choose where and how I birth. My homebirth was extremely safe, with regular monitoring of my baby. All normal, health procedures were followed and i was allowed to birth in a safe, familiar environment surrounded by as much family and as many friends i chose. My birth was not medicalised, but allowed to happen naturally and safely in the comfort of my own home, with a very qualified midwife of my choice with whom i felt very comfortable and trusting of her judgement. With a medical background and as a Chiropractor myself, I chose not to have pain relieving drugs at my disposal, but only the midwife in whom i placed all of my faith and to whom I entrusted both mine and my babies life. At no point did I ever fell unsafe and that i had made the wrong decision. My decision was an informed decision. In fact, I found that the midwife I had could answer more questions that I had than any other midwife or obstetrician i had met in both the public and private hospital setting. For this reason, I chose to homebirth with the midwife who had previously worked in a hospital setting and definitely knew what she was doing. After being guaranteed a C-section by a private obstetrician, I decided that a homebirth was the right decision for me. I achieved the safe, natural vaginal birth for which i had hoped and I felt much safer in my home with a midwife i trusted than being in a hospital setting. How then can i be asked to birth in a hospital when i had such a smooth, safe labour in the comfort of my own home? I urge the decision to outlaw homebirths to be re-considered. Please. I honestly will choose to have no more children, should i be forced to go to the hospital. Is this law really worth passing? I do not believe so. I can name over 50 safe homebirths that occurred in SA in the last few years, with the same amazing midwife. I see no reason for her not to be able to continue to be there for all of our families should we decide to have more children in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Amy Herreen