

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. We all need to be able to plan the birth most suited to each of us.

We had a homebirth earlier this year. The pre-natal care, in my home, from the same experienced midwives was invaluable to my confidence approaching the birth. The planning of the homebirth was precious, and it included knowing that we would go to hospital, only if it was required.

We were lucky that at that time, we wanted a homebirth, and could afford it. Having spent \$5,000, we also understand that we saved the taxpayer money, from not calling upon the hospital services.

The birth was an amazing and empowering experience, with only familiar faces and surrounds, incredible support, and ended with 3 of us in our own bed. It was empowering.

If pregnant again, I would plan exactly the same birth IF IT IS A LEGAL OPTION!

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Sharpe

&

Elisabeth Sadler