

I write to voice my concern about the current proposed Bills related to midwives; including proposed national registration, access to medicare provider numbers, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and the requirement for professional indemnity insurance. As follows:

\* Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009  
<<http://parlinfo.apth.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22legislation/billhome/r4151%22>>

Midwife Professional Indemnity (Commonwealth Contribution) Scheme Bill 2009  
<<http://parlinfo.apth.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22legislation/billhome/r4153%22>>

Midwife Professional Indemnity (Run-off Cover Support Payment) Bill 2009  
<<http://parlinfo.apth.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22legislation/billhome/r4152%22>>

While I am aware that many positive changes to the provision of midwifery services may be made possible through these bills, I am concerned that there is not equal provision to all qualified midwives. My main concern is that independent or private midwives will be unable to continue to support women in their choice to birth at home, as they will be required to have indemnity insurance which is not currently available to them. I ask that you work towards a solution where midwives in private practice have access to insurance. This could be government funded.

The Maternity Services Review recommended greater maternity options and birthchoices be made available to Australian women, stating that women requested more options including access to midwifery led care and continuity of carer. Women's choices should not be reduced by removing the option of homebirth with a chosen midwife. I understand that there is a recommendation for the states to provide more opportunity's for women to access maternity care via birthcentres and midwifery led units or team practices. This is an excellent idea, and a great move forward for birthing women, but to chose to birth at home with a known midwife must also be an option for Australian women in the 21st Century. Birthcentres may be based on a medical model or have very strict criteria, resulting in them not being accessible to many birthing women (eg. women over a certain age, planning a vaginal birth after a caesarean VBAC, with a gestation a few days over what is considered 'normal' etc.) and with team midwifery a woman is supported by a select group of midwives throughout her pregnancy and birth – a very different scenario than developing a relationship with one midwife (and a backup) as with a private midwife. This is genuine one-to-one midwifery.

Here in WA we have an excellent government funded homebirth program. My second child was born on this program; I was supported and cared for by two homebirth midwives before and after my babies birth and had a VBAC (Vaginal Birth After Caesarean) in hospital with the support of these two midwives. While excellent, this program has strict geographical boundarys, as well as a set annual number of births and acceptance criteria. This makes it unavailable to many birthing women who may chose to spend approximately \$4000 on employing an equally qualified and experienced independent midwife to enable them to birth at home. This financial inequality to date has been very difficult to swallow, but to make homebirth illegal for some women because they live in Rockingham rather than Fremantle is ludicrous!

I chose to birth my third child at home attended by an excellent independent midwife. My experience was wonderful; a very positive event for my whole family, including my sister who was present. As someone who has also experienced an emergency caesarean, the difference in the birth events is profound and I know that to be able to birth at home is a truly empowering, wonderful and normal experience. I do not want other Australian women deprived of this opportunity.

Australian women deserve the right to chose to birth at home. The birth of a child is a momentous and personal event for a birthing woman, her partner and other children in the family. The option of birthing at home can include all these people in a meaningful and significant way. Birth at home with a qualified and experienced midwife is a safe option. A birthing woman should have the right to

chose her caregiver and place of birth. To deny Australian women this option is to do a grave disservice to women and their families.

Thankyou for your consideration,

Rosemary Rees