

To whom it may concern,

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 in the interests of public safety, all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Please don't let a woman's choice to have a midwife assisted home birth taken away. The announcements by Minister Roxon on the 24/6/09 have me not knowing whether to celebrate or cry. If I chose to birth a child in my local hospital, I will have access to a private midwife who can provide full care. Every woman has the right to have the care provider of her choice in hospital, and midwife-led care is supported by research to be beneficial to woman and babies! This right to choose midwife-led care needs to extend to the home.

I have experienced midwife led care in the home for one of my children. It was a choice made as it suited my obstetric history. Minister Roxon has made it clear that midwives will require professional indemnity to register to practice. This is great, registration is great, PI is great. She has made it clear though, that commonwealth supported PI for midwives will be void in home birth situations. This is backwards. This means I will have no registered professional available to provide safe care for me and any future children. My choice to plan a safe and well attended home birth is being stripped.

Please, I realise home births are a tiny percentage of births in total, but it is a valid and safe, internationally peer reviewed research supported choice. Don't make midwives criminals for supporting women's choices and don't withdraw women's access to trained and registered midwives who are willing and able to provide care in the home.

If you could please raise these concerns before the legislation is presented, I would greatly appreciate it!

Sincerely,

Mrs Isis Caple