

Re: Enquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

I am writing to express my concerns over the above bills. My understanding of these bills is that it will enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospitals.

It is great that Medicare funding will be available for midwifery care however it MUST include homebirth also. Australia is already behind in this area compared to our neighbours in New Zealand and also the UK and even Canada and Netherlands. These countries support and assist women to choose homebirth and fund registered midwives through their national scheme.

It is paramount that families in Australia are not disadvantaged in the area of birthing. I insist that we do not limit the skills of midwives to the hospital environment alone, as it is essential for mothers to have the safe assistance of a registered midwife in the environment befitting the choices of the entire family. A homebirth is a viable choice for many families and the presence of a qualified, registered midwife is part of that picture. The qualification of Midwifery is to be utilised widely and proudly in all settings, hospital and home alike.

The intersection of this intended legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I hope this is an unintended consequence and ask that steps are taken to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills. Please do not limit the employment opportunities of Midwives to hospitals alone as the supply and demand of homebirth choices and midwife services should be encouraged and allowed to flourish as in the case in many other countries.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Kaye.