
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees

Inquiry into the "Health Insurance Amendment (Medicare Funding for Certain Types of Abortion) Bill 2013.

I am making a submission to the **Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees** on the Inquiry into the "Health Insurance Amendment (Medicare Funding for Certain Types of Abortion) Bill 2013.

I write on behalf of the ACT Right to Life Association to indicate our opposition to abortions carried out for gender selection reasons and the applicability of Medicare funding thereto.

The reasons behind our attitude relate to the following aspects:

1. The unacceptability to Australians of the use of Medicare funding for the purpose of gender selection abortions;
2. The prevalence of gender selection - with preference for a male child - amongst some ethnic groups present in Australia and the recourse to Medicare funded abortions to terminate female children
3. The use of Medicare funded gender-selection abortions for the purpose of 'family-balancing'

4. Support for campaigns by United Nations agencies to end the discriminatory practice of gender-selection through implementing disincentives for gender-selection abortions';

5. Concern from medical associations in first world countries about the practice of gender-selection abortion, viz. Canada, USA, UK.

1. The unacceptability to Australians of the use of Medicare funding for the purpose of gender selection abortions;

Sex selection is banned in Australia in IVF programs for all except genetic diseases. It is not allowed for social and cultural reasons. This should also apply to abortion.

Taxpayers should not have to fund gender selection abortions.

- A Poll conducted by Galaxy in Tasmania in February 2013, for *Emily's Voice*, found that 92% of respondents opposed abortion based on the the sex of the child. For young people aged 16-24, 97% were opposed. This figure is remarkable, given that 61% of respondents supported abortion.
- A Poll conducted by *Southern Cross Bioethics* (2005) found that, of the respondents who were 'strongly in favour of abortion' 82% believe that sex selection abortion should not be legal. Of that 82%, 85% said that gender selection abortion is not morally acceptable.
 2. The prevalence of gender selection - with preference for a male child - amongst some ethnic groups present in Australia and overseas and the recourse to Medicare funded abortions to terminate female children;

Overseas

- We are aware that this is a common practice overseas in China and India in particular but also widely practiced in some ethnic groups including in Australia. In China and India there is a huge gender imbalance, with more boys than girls.
- China - in 2010 census, 100 boys for every 100 girls. Source - The Lancet, *Volume 378, Issue 9793*, Page 742, 27 August 2011
In 2012, this was 117.7 boys to each 100 girls. Source: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-01/22/content_16156659.htm
- India - in 2011 down to 914 girls for each 1000 boys. Source <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/indias-gender-imbalance-worst-in-recorded-history/>

3. The use of Medicare funded gender-selection abortions for the purpose of 'family-balancing'

There is some evidence from doctors that it is some evidence from doctors that sex selection abortions are occurring. One doctor in Melbourne was asked by a couple for a referral for an abortion when the 19 week ultrasound showed that the baby was a girl. The couple already had a girl and didn't want another. The woman had the abortion at about 20 weeks. When the woman became pregnant again, the couple returned to the doctor, asking how soon they could find out the sex of the baby The couple has now proceeded with this pregnancy. This case of sex selection abortion has been referred to the Medical Board of Australia.

4. Support for campaigns by United Nations agencies to end the discriminatory practice of gender-selection through implementing disincentives for gender-selection abortions';

A number of United Nations agencies have expressed grave concerns about sex selection or gender selection abortions:

- a) The **UN** condemned sex selection abortion in a 2011 Report: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789241501460_eng.pdf.
- b) The **UN** estimates up to 200 million females are demographically missing worldwide: <http://www.un.org/events/women/iwd/2007/factsfigures.shtml>.
- c) A recent study by the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** revealed that in Albania 112 boys are born for every 100 girls, while in Kosovo and Montenegro the figures are 110 and 109 boys for every 100 girls respectively:
<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/Sex%20Imbalances%20at%20Birth.%20PDF%20UNFPA%20APRO%20publication%202012.pdf>.
- d) The **Council of Europe** in a November, 2011 resolution voiced its concern over the rising trend of prenatal gender selection:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/9794577/The-abortion-of-unwanted-girls-taking-place-in-the-UK.html>

Concern from Medical Bodies

These medical associations have made some statement opposing sex selection abortion, at least for gender selection of a child for social or cultural reasons or 'family balancing'.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians

- Expressed concern that use of 'gender test' kit could lead to sex selection abortions. Source: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10577091
- Opposed the statements by a Sydney obstetrician calling for sex selection abortions for 'family balancing'. Source: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/when-parents-select-babys-sex-20111015-1lq8b.html>

Australia - NHMRC

- Guidelines for IVF prohibit gender selection.

NHMRC ART GUIDELINES: "Sex selection (by whatever means) should not be undertaken except to reduce the risk of transmission of a serious genetic condition".

Source <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-ethics/australian-health-ethics-committee-ahec/assisted-reproductive-technology-art/assisted->

National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

Medical Associations in Australia the UK, USA AND Canada have all express concern about gender selection abortions.

In their submission to this Inquiry, they state, in a survey of their councillors, "no-one was in favour of social gender selection". They proposed not revealing the sex of a child until 20 weeks http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Committees?url=fapa_ctte/health_insur_amend_bill_2013/submissions.htm

These and other appropriate reasons we ask the Committee to support the passage of Senator Madigan's bill.

Paul Monagle
President
ACT Right to Life Association.