



YOUR JOURNEY. OUR SUPPORT.

PO Box 3605
Rhodes Waterside
NSW 2138
Australia

T: 1800 888 896
T: +61 (0)2 9737 0158
F: +61 (0)2 9737 0245

info@access.org.au
www.access.org.au

24 July 2009

Mr Elton Humphery
Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Suite SI 59
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Humphery

**Re: Health Insurance Amendment (Extended Medicare Safety Net)
Bill 2009**

AccessAustralia is a consumer led, independent, not for profit charity, committed to providing whole of life support for women and men who experience difficulties conceiving and their families. Access strives to raise community awareness about infertility by being a national voice to bring the social, psychological and financial concerns of couples to governments and the medical and scientific communities. Our Patrons are Olympic gold medalist, Glynis Nunn-Cearns OAM and Candice Reed, Australia's first born IVF child. Access serves as lifetime resource for support and information around reproductive health needs.

Infertility is not a choice. The one in six who need medical help have no control over this condition. IVF is a standard, proven and highly successful treatment for infertility, in some cases almost twice as successful than natural conception.

AccessAustralia is concerned that if this Bill is passed, it will deny many hardworking Australian families their last chance to have a child. The Medicare Safety Net has ensured that every Australian has had that opportunity. It is not surprising that government expenditure increased after the Safety Net was introduced. Prior to the Safety Net, patients paid their out-of-pocket costs directly to the clinic, so when these costs were directed through the Safety Net, of course government spending would have increased, without any increase in clinic fees.

In the Explanatory Notes, the reason given for introducing a cap is that some doctors are overcharging. AccessAustralia urges the government to take this matter up with the particular doctors concerned, rather than penalising ALL Australian families who need IVF to have a family, through this Bill, which will mean an increase in out-of-pocket costs of around \$3,000 per cycle.

More than 40,000 individuals were able to access IVF services with the support of the Medicare Safety Net in 2008 and nearly 11,000 babies are born each year as a result. Based on estimates reported in The Australian newspaper, (2/4/09), the \$42 million spent on IVF in the Safety Net equates to approximately \$4,500 for each of these IVF children born last year. IVF therefore is a cost-effective, valuable investment given the significant return each of these children, as productive Australians, will bring their families and this country of ours.

PATRONS

Glynis Nunn-Cearns OAM
Candice Reed

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Sandra K Dill AM

DIRECTORS

Doreen Burge
David Rawlings
Dr Anne Clark
Dr Railton Hill
Donna Howlett
Rebecca Jelen
Prof Gabor T Kovacs AM
Dr John McBain
Nicole Phillips
Maree Pickens

Australia's National Voice

Access Australia's National Infertility Network Ltd.
ABN 78 061 639 549

IVF patients are trying to manage the expense of treatment on one hand, while balancing the Government's token \$900 stimulus cheque in the other. It seems at least inequitable that the government on one hand is paying \$5,000 to women who can conceive without medical help, while on the other hand, making it more costly and distressing for those who have a medical condition requiring medical treatment to have a family. This is the cruellest blow. It seems that everyone else is getting a handout while we are being asked to pay more. This is not equitable treatment.

In addition, many children born through IVF are now adults and asking why their elected government appears to value their existence less than other children - whose parents did not need medical help to give birth to them. If you think of an average classroom, around one child in each is an IVF baby. In terms of the future of our nation, the proposed Bill if passed, will remove this child.

As infertile people we have contributed, all our working lives through taxes, to the education of everyone else's children. Therefore, it does not seem unreasonable to give us help for the only chance that we now have for a child.

We urge our government to reconsider this proposal and provide equity of access to the Medicare Safety Net, so that ALL Australian working families can have the chance to share in the joy that a family can bring.

Sincerely



Sandra K Dill AM
Chief Executive

M 0419 019 690

E sandradill@access.org.au