



AUSTRALIAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION

South Australian Branch

2 October 2008

Committee Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Inquiry into item 16525 in Part 3 of Schedule 1 to the Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Regulations 2007

The Australian Family Association (SA Branch) supports the move by Senator Guy Barnett to disallow Medicare item 16525.

Government Responsibility

Funding second trimester abortions violates one of the chief aims of government: protection of the innocent and vulnerable.

Human Viability

Given that children born in the second trimester (14 to 26 weeks) period can survive outside the womb, it is long overdue that Medicare halted funding abortions within this time frame. Children born at 21 weeks are living proof that the unborn child is a viable human at that stage of pregnancy.

Violent Act

Abortion of the unborn is not painless. The cruel and barbaric procedures used for second trimester abortions inflict excruciating pain on the, at that stage, well-developed unborn child. For example, the partial birth abortion procedure involves the delivery of the child, except for the head. The back of the head is pierced with scissors and the brains are then sucked out. Medicare funds should not be used for such violent acts.

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Adverse Mental Health Affects

Medicare funding should not be used for a procedure, that as well as ending the life of the unborn, has been shown to detrimentally affect the mother's mental health. A recent New Zealand study found that 42 per cent of women who had abortions had experienced major depression within the last four years. This was nearly double the rate of women who had never become pregnant. Women who had had an abortion were also at an increased risk of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal behaviours.¹

Community Concerns

Recent studies have shown that a majority of Australians support a reduction of the number of abortions. A December 2004 survey conducted by the Southern Cross Bioethics Institute found that 64% to 73% think the abortion rate is too high, whilst 87% believed it would be a good thing if the number of abortions were reduced.² A 2005 national study conducted by Market Facts (QLD) found that 67% of Australians are opposed to Medicare funding of second trimester abortions.

Parental Support

With Australia's ageing population and the consequential problems posed, lawmakers should be taking measures that aid an increase in the birth rate, not decrease it. Instead of funding second trimester abortions, funds should be allocated to aid in the cost of caring for children. This is especially important given that economic reasons have been listed as one of the most stated for women seeking an abortion.³

Discrimination

Discrimination against disabled persons, who make such valuable contributions to our way of life, is not tolerated in our society; it should not be tolerated within the womb. Many abortions are performed for eugenic reasons, some for issues as small as a cleft palate or missing finger. The Australian Government is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. If it is to be seen to be taking the rights of disabled persons seriously, it must cease funding of second trimester abortions. After all, if the right to life is not upheld, discussion of any other right becomes irrelevant.

Conclusion

The Australian Family Association (SA Branch) supports and commends the move by Senator Guy Barnett to disallow funding of second trimester abortions. The right to life is the most basic and fundamental human right; government must not fund its violation.

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¹ Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, Volume 47, Number 1, January 2006, pp. 16-24

² *Give Women Choice: Australia Speaks on Abortion*, Southern Cross Bioethics Institute, <http://www.bioethics.org.au/docs/givingchoice/ExecutiveSummary.pdf>, viewed 2 October 2008

³ Aida Torres and Jacqueline Darroch Forrest, "Why do women have abortions?" *Family Planning Perspectives*, July/August 1988, pp.169-70

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