

Mark Spencer FCA, MAICD, B.Bus., M.Lab. Rel. & Law

Chartered Accountant

23 April 2013

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members

RE: Inquiry into the *Health Insurance Amendment (Medicare Funding for Certain Types of Abortion) Bill 2013*

I refer to the abovementioned inquiry and make the following submission in relation to certain of the items outlined in the terms of reference. In doing so I note the limited focus of the proposed Bill dealing only with terminations undertaken solely on the basis of the gender of the foetus.

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

'Gender selection abortions' are abhorrent and cannot be condoned under any circumstance. There is no legal, moral, medical, religious or ethical basis on which such a termination can be justified. Regardless of the views that may be held in relation to terminations in other circumstances a termination solely on the basis of the gender of the foetus is unacceptable.

It follows that the use of Medicare funding for such procedures is unacceptable.

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

I have no evidence on the prevalence of such terminations beyond what is commonly on the public record in relation to the preference in some cultures for a male child.

However, with respect, can I suggest that this question is unhelpful and possibly damaging? The subject of the Bill is very narrow and objective in nature. It is not directly or indirectly targeting any particular group within Australia whether ethnically based or otherwise. To imply that gender selection may be more prevalent in some ethnic groups as this question does is irrelevant. Indeed to focus on the prevalence or otherwise of this practice is itself unhelpful.

The issue is whether one or one thousand children are terminated as a result of gender selection abortions. Whether one life or many is saved is beside the point, if even one life is saved that would be sufficient to justify this Bill and the elimination of Medicare funding for this practice.

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

As should be clear from the responses above there is no basis for justification of gender selection abortions. 'Family balancing' seems to be the flimsiest of justifications that I doubt has any real support. My wife and I have three children. Two girls and a boy and each are loved and cherished and this would have been no less so if it was three girls or three boys.

Children are not a fashion accessory to be chosen to suit a particular lifestyle and discarded should they not 'match'

I am not in a position to comment on the other aspects of the Terms of Reference.

In summary I strongly support the Bill and encourage the Committee to do likewise.

Yours faithfully

Mark Spencer