

I wish to provide comments about the proposed Health Insurance Amendment Bill to change Medicare Funding for certain types of abortion.

To start with, I am very concerned that there should have been a presumption that abortion should be funded by Medicare across the board, such that legislation is required to impose restrictions.

It seems more appropriate to me that there should be careful definition of the circumstances in which such a procedure should be publicly funded, and that legislation should be required to extend those circumstances, with the associated requirement for a debate and vote by the Parliament of Australia. This would apply consistency to the legislation which has taken just such an approach to most other medical procedures anyway.

It needs to be recognised that this procedure is, in every instance, ending a life and due care as to the circumstances in which this occurs at public expense should be a basic consideration embedded within the legislation.

This approach is more conducive to restraining questionable reasons for termination.

The failure to take this approach has resulted in extensions to the reasons for performing abortions which are far from the original concerns for women's health and welfare, such that we are now in a situation where the procedure is being applied not only as a contraceptive measure, but has even been extended to reasons of gender selection.

The concept of gender selection should be repugnant to any decent society and I can think of no reason the notion should be entertained, let alone publicly funded by the people of a free and, I thought, civilised country like Australia.

In my opinion it is contrary to any concept of improving the status of women, as the likely result will be skewed to preferring male children. In an uncontrolled environment it can lead to results such as population imbalances that would never occur had nature taken its natural course. The results of such actions can be seen overseas where gender selection procedures are available. It is naive in my opinion to assume this cannot happen here,

I would like to see a change in the underlying assumptions about the availability and funding of abortion which I think have been shown over time to be in error.

Rather than the current lack of reasonable debate and control over the availability and funding of the procedure freeing women, we now face the issue of gender discrimination at the very earliest stages of life and find ourselves in a position where we need to try and justify denying funding for a scenario we very likely never anticipated when the original rules were laid down.