

Submission regarding the Health Insurance Amendment (Medicare Funding for Certain Types of Abortion) Bill 2013

I do not believe medicare funding for gender selective abortions benefits the Australian population.

I appreciate that it is difficult to ascertain how many such abortions are currently take place, and that legislating has a risk of stero-typing ethnic groups.

However, I think one of the important roles of medical professionals is to provide women with accurate and comprehensive information about the decisions they are facing. If a woman was considering whether or not to keep a pregnancy based on its gender, and was informed that the Australian government had placed a funding restriction on abortions when chosen for this reason, I imagine this would cause some people to reconsider why they were contemplating this in the first place. Some may go on to have an abortion and cite another 'government-approved' reason, and not indicate their gender-selection preferences as part of their decision. I don't think the passing of this amendment, to be a useful bill, would necessarily end any potential gender-selection abortion. Nor to be beneficial would it dissuade anyone who might wish to abort based on gender. I don't think passing a bill like this has the power to change a person's inner motivations in every situation.

It would, I think, provide a disincentive to abortion for this purpose, and medical professionals could have an opportunity to explore with the woman what her options are with greater depth, including the reasons many Australians find gender-selection abortion inappropriate.

I understand from friends in medical professions that gender-selection abortion is not exclusive to ethnic minority groups in Australia, but is also very much present in 'white' middle-class Australia.

If passing this bill meant a few hundred women – or their partners – thought more carefully about the value of each gender in their future child, and some decided it was not worth the personal cost to abort, I think this bill is worth passing. The benefit for those children born, in 50 years, would be unquestionable. The benefit for their parents would also, I think, be unquestionable.

I think this bill needs to sit not in isolation. I believe the bill would create a disincentive, but other work needs to continue to change attitudes towards gender, whether favouring a female child due to cultural background or favouring either gender to 'balance' a family.

Thank-you for your time.