

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

This petition of staff, students and volunteers of the River Nile Learning Centre draws to the attention of the House:

The disadvantages and distress of low-income mothers due the fact that the baby bonus payment starts only *after* the birth of a baby. Many low income mothers-to-be have no savings to buy essential items (pram, cot etc). When the baby bonus payment starts mothers have to make these purchases with a newborn and whilst recovering from the frequent physical implications from giving birth, which is both stressful and difficult and not a good start to motherhood or for the baby. The baby bonus is payable also to women who give birth to a stillborn baby. There is therefore no reason why the baby bonus could not start from 32 weeks of pregnancy. IF there were complications at this stage of the pregnancy and no live baby would be born it would still result in the full baby bonus payment. There would be no risk in women getting "overpaid".

We therefore ask the House to: Improve the delivery of the baby bonus payment by starting instalments from 32 weeks of pregnancy. There are no risks to Centrelink other than needing to confirm a pregnancy at its advanced stage by a medical expert (much like the current form to be completed after birth by the midwife/ doctor). This would make a significant difference to low income mothers-to-be and their babies.