

Submission to the Senate Committee Inquiry,

**Re: “Health Insurance Amendment
(Medicare Funding for Certain Types of Abortion) Bill 2013”**

- 1. The unacceptability to Australians of the use of Medicare funding for the purpose of gender selection abortion.** I am writing to express my strong opposition to the use of Medicare funding for the purpose of gender selection abortion for the following reason. As written in the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) females face discrimination, violence and exploitation no matter what country they are born in. Therefore we must protect both our women and children, including the unborn, by not advocating gender selection abortion. In my opinion, Medicare funding should be used for far more important issues rather than for gender selection abortion. For example, we have people with life threatening illnesses requiring surgery waiting longer and longer for these operations, and only getting worse. Medicare should prioritise life threatening illnesses with funding rather than self centered demands for gender selection abortion. [United Press International](#) (Dec 23, 2010) have reported that a majority of Australians believe that gender selection of babies, through IVF or abortion should be illegal.
- 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.** The practice of sex-selective abortion has been condemned by international and human rights groups, with the explanatory statement noting that "In 2011 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued an interagency statement entitled Preventing gender-biased sex selection." It goes on to conclude that the practice of gender selection is "discriminatory and greatly prejudicial" towards the female child and women in society as a whole. As ethnic communities in Australia grow and expand, there is a very real threat that some of these individuals will import their cultural norms, such as preference for a male rather than a female child through medicare funding of gender selection abortion. To attempt to monitor and select who is suitable for gender selection abortion, will only create problems which cannot be managed appropriately. This is a can of worms we do not want to open and one which has severe moral and ethical implications.
- 3. The use of Medicare funded gender-selection abortions for the purpose of “family-balancing”.** I am strongly opposed to this idea on moral and ethical grounds. However the following information from Scripted (A Journal of Law, Technology & Society 2004) highlights this even more. Under the title of “ Conclusions”: At the moment, the question remains whether the Government will follow the HFEA recommendations to maintain the prohibition on non-medical sex selection and to extend protection to the regulation of sperm sorting techniques. The recent HFEA reports on sex selection revealed that there is strong public consensus against non-medical sex selection in the UK. This analysis aimed to describe the current state of affairs and to address the main controversial issues. Fundamental questions still remain, however. Does the issue really depend on the availability of reliable techniques? Is this only about assessing risks and balancing the benefits? Could human rights be used as a safeguard against parental intervention? If there are

complex ethical questions to address, will the law address them and balance the relevant values accordingly? The sanctity of life which doctors are supposedly taught to uphold, should not be compromised by the self centered demands of parents preferring one sex over another. This simply is exploitation of the innocent for immoral and unethical reasons. Therefore Medicare funding of abortions for family balancing should not be permitted....ever!

4. Support for campaigns by United Nations agencies to end the discriminatory practice of gender-selection through implementing disincentives for gender-selection abortions. UN News Centre said; UN agencies urge renewed efforts to end practice of 'son preference, 14 June 2011 – Five United Nations agencies have banded together to call for urgently addressing gender-biased sex selection favoring boys, a common practice in many parts of South, East and Central Asia that they say fuels a culture of discrimination and violence. The prevalence of gender selection in other nations already exposes the threat that this will not be contained here and will be too costly to monitor and manage effectively even with disincentives. Therefore I am advocating that we do not offer nor make available these choices for gender-selection abortion here in Australia.

5. Concern from medical associations in first world countries about the practice of gender-selection abortion, viz. Canada, USA, UK. ACOG, The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists dated Feb 2007 under the title of Ethical Positions of other Organizations, said the following; Many organizations have issued statements concerning the ethics of health care provider participation in sex selection. The ethics committee of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine maintains that the use of preconception sex selection by preimplantation genetic diagnosis for non medical reasons is ethically problematic and "should be discouraged". Under the title of Sex Selection ACOG says; However, the committee opposes meeting requests for sex selection for personal and family reasons, including family balancing, because of the concern that such requests may ultimately support sexist practices. Because a patient is entitled to obtain personal medical information, including information about the sex of her fetus, it will sometimes be impossible for health care professionals to avoid unwitting participation in sex selection. This outlines the dangers associated with practices of this nature which clearly indicates the problematic consequences of gender selection. It clearly shows this is not in the best interests of either the mother or the child.