

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Inquiry into Medicare item 16525 in Part 3 of Schedule 1 to the *Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Regulations 2007*.

HEARING DATE: 29 October 2008

QUESTION:

- 1) How long has there been Commonwealth subsidy for this service?
- 2) What was the purpose of the 1995 change to 16525 - during consultations were any concerns expressed about the scope of the preceding item?
- 3) What is the definition of psychosocial?
- 4) Is it a requirement under South Australian Legislation that this service only be performed in public hospitals after defined gestational ages?

ANSWER:

- 1) A Commonwealth subsidy for “management of second trimester labour, with or without induction” was first introduced on 1 October 1976 under the then Medical Benefits Scheme.
- 2) The purpose of the 1 November 1995 change to item 16525 was to ensure that it reflects and supports current obstetric practice.

During consultations no concerns were raised regarding the scope of the item.

- 3) The term psychosocial is not defined in the *Health Insurance Act 1973* nor the *Health Insurance (General Medical Service Table) Regulations 2007*. This term is not included in the item description for Medicare item 16525.

According to the Public Health Association of Australia in its publication *Australia: Public Health Perspectives 3rd Edition 2005* - “The definition of psychosocial indications differs within the legislation among different states. When psychosocial reasons for second and third trimester abortions are cited, this generally refers to serious mental illness of the mother.”

- 4) The legislation in South Australia requires that termination may only occur in a prescribed hospital as outlined in the regulations or by a legally qualified medical practitioner in the circumstances where immediate termination is required to prevent grave injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman. Prescribed hospitals, as listed in Schedule 3 of the *Criminal Law Consolidation (Medical Termination of Pregnancy) Regulations 1996*, include some private hospitals. There is no legislative requirement for terminations to be done only in public hospitals after defined gestational ages.