

The Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Standing Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Email: fpa.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms McDonald,

The YWCA Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

The YWCA is a global network of women advancing social justice and creating opportunities and services for the development of women and their families. Through our state-based local associations, we offer a range of programs aimed at developing women's leadership and promoting gender equality. As a not-for-profit organisation with a focus on addressing the needs of women and girls, a feminist agenda informs our work.

Our brief submission to the inquiry addresses part (2) (d) in the terms of reference: ***the effects of disallowing this item.***

The YWCA Australia opposes any moves to remove Medicare item number 16525.

As you are aware, this Medicare item relates to "*Management of second trimester labour, with or without induction, for intrauterine fetal death, gross fetal abnormality or life-threatening disease*". Despite reports, this item number does not relate to surgical termination of pregnancy in the second trimester.

We are concerned that if this item number is removed, women may be forced to continue pregnancies where their baby is likely to die before or during birth due to a fatal condition or gross abnormality. It may also jeopardise vital medical care of women with life-threatening illnesses, and any treatment received for such conditions may damage the fetus.

Of course, removing Medicare funding for this procedure will have the greatest impact on poorer women, who may be forced to continue carrying a dead or dying baby against medical advice. At such an emotionally difficult and distressing time in their lives, families should not face unnecessary financial hardship.

Medicare item numbers are determined by expert panels of Medicare Australia, in line with current best practice in clinical care. We believe moves to disallow or remove Medicare item number 16525 interfere with the integrity of the Medicare Australia processes and will compromise the healthcare of pregnant women.



Please do not hesitate to contact me on 02 6230 5150 if you have any queries or would like to discuss these issues further with the YWCA Australia.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Raina Hunter'.

Raina Hunter
Policy Coordinator
YWCA Australia
1 October 2008