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

1 October, 2008

Committee Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

The *Atheist Foundation of Australia Inc* wishes to make the following comments on the motion regarding the above inquiry in light of facts publicly available.

- The vast bulk of abortions performed in the second trimester (14 - 26 weeks) are because of gross foetal abnormality.
- Ex-uterine foetal viability at 21 weeks is far less than assured in the majority of instances and is most likely to be problematical to health from then on, severely affecting quality of life. Very few foetuses survive even after removal from the uterus after 24 weeks.
- Only 1% of abortions occur after 20 weeks resulting from severe foetal abnormality. This figure alone brings into question the reason for the motion.

The well-founded opinion of the *Atheist Foundation of Australia Inc* is that religious agenda is driving a minority mentality; erroneously presumptive in the conviction that abortion is a matter of flippancy and not necessity.

- Politician assessment of what constitutes severe foetal abnormality is inappropriate. The pregnant female is in the best position to decide, on advice from the medical profession, whether on not to continue with the pregnancy.
- It is drawing an extremely long bow to suggest that such abortions discriminate on the grounds of disability. This is a religiously based ideological position, which claims foetal rights equal to those of a human person. Abortion is an accepted medical procedure, thus making that argument null and void.
- The motion does not address the distraught feelings experienced by a pregnant woman faced with having to abort after expending a large amount of emotional capital on the pregnancy.
- Cutting funding because of this motion will further exacerbate the trauma experienced. Poor women will bear the brunt.
- Quasi intellectualising by the narrow agenda-driven fanatical religious right, affecting citizens of Australia's secular democracy, should not have sway in parliamentary process.

The *Atheist Foundation of Australia Inc* is hopeful that sensible politicians will decisively vote this ill-conceived motion into failed obscurity.