

Thursday 2nd October 2008

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

Dear Committee Secretary

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

We wish to submit comment under part 2(d) of the Terms of Reference 'the effects of disallowing this item'.

Removing this item number will disadvantage women in the second trimester of pregnancy as many lethal and severe foetal abnormalities cannot be detected until this stage.

In addition, some women experience life threatening illness during pregnancy, such as heart disease or a cancer diagnosis. In some cases, women and their doctors may consider that it is in the best interests of their continuing life and health to terminate the pregnancy.

Removal of the Medicare item number may mean women will be forced to continue a pregnancy where the foetus has been diagnosed with a gross abnormality and is likely to die before or during birth, or may die shortly after birth due to a fatal condition that causes great pain and suffering.

Such difficult pregnancies can cause severe psychological distress. Adding financial burdens by not funding appropriate medical care via Medicare will only add to the distress faced by women and their partners.

We urge you to retain funding for this item number.

Yours sincerely



MARILYN BEAUMONT
Executive Director

