

Kate Fitzpatrick, witness for Surrogacy Australia

Opening Statement

Good morning and thank you, Senators for the opportunity to provide evidence at the hearing's inquiry.

My name is Kate Fitzpatrick, and I'm appearing today as a former intended parent in a surrogacy process, and a Board Member at Surrogacy Australia.

I want to speak specifically to the issue of Medicare support for gestational surrogacy. The fact is, although Australian society has deemed infertility enough of a health issue to warrant Medicare support for IVF when the patient can carry the baby, this same support is still denied to people undertaking IVF procedures in the hopes of achieving a gestational surrogate pregnancy. They fall through this gap in the regulations, making having a baby far more expensive for those who genuinely have no choice but to use IVF.

I believe my colleague Alexander Pasquale has addressed this issue as it pertains to prospective dads; I'd like to support his evidence and add that women who cannot carry children have often suffered serious illness, accident or injury. I can speak from experience – for me it was a life-saving emergency hysterectomy when my daughter was born, the psychological effects of which are still being felt four years later.

When my turn came to embark on surrogacy, Medicare would not cover me or our surrogate for any of the IVF procedures. Our clinic was confused about what was and wasn't allowed, which was stressful for us and for our surrogate. There is no reason that we at Surrogacy Australia can see for Medicare to be withheld, given the negligible taxpayer cost and the fact that surrogacy is literally the only option for women who can't carry children, single people, and many members of the LGBTQI+ community.