

Stillbirths payment 'given for abortions'

Pro-life activist urges government to close loophole

Prominent pro-life advocate Professor Joanna Howe during a protest at Parliament House.
Picture: Matt Turner



**Kathryn Bermingham
Lucy Rutherford**

A \$4225 payment to support the parents of stillborn babies is being made available following late-term abortions, in what pro-life advocates say is a "horrific loophole" that should be urgently closed.

The federal government's Stillborn Baby Payment is provided to eligible parents of stillborn babies born at a gestation period of at least 20 weeks or weighing at least 400g at the time of their birth.

The stillbirth must be certified by a medical professional before the one-off payment can be processed but there is no rule barring access following a late-term abortion.

The South Australian Abortion Action Coalition (SAAAC) said the payment recognises the impact on patients who need to access a termination.

Prominent pro-life figure and law professor Joanna Howe said she first heard about the potential for the stillborn baby payment to be accessed for a late-term abortion when a hospital administrator raised with her concerns about the "increasing problem".

She said, since then, several midwives and nurses have told her of their distress at having to sign forms to authorise the payment after an abortion.

"One midwife was in tears over the phone telling me of a mother who had aborted her

healthy 28-week-old baby and was intending to use the payment for a holiday in Bali," she said.

Dr Howe, a key architect of abortion reforms recently voted down by state parliament, said the stillborn baby payment was intended to support parents while they grieve and make funeral arrangements.

"It is a slap in the face to parents who suffer the terrible grief of unexpectedly losing their child to a stillbirth," she said. She added that allowing the payment following abortion "opens the door to abuses of the payment".

"The stillborn parenting payment being accessible in cases of late-term abortion is a horrific loophole that needs to

be closed as an urgent priority."

An SAAAC spokeswoman said the organisation supports the policy.

"(It) treats abortion care as healthcare and recognises the complex impacts on patients who need to access a termination of pregnancy after 20 weeks," she said.

She pointed to SAAAC-published information that states "later abortions are rare but essential", and they present traumatic circumstances for patients.

A Department of Social Services spokesman said "there is no evidence to support the claim that policy settings incentivise late-term abortion".

"The Australian government recognises the tragic loss

and trauma of stillbirth," he said.

There were 805 people who received the Stillborn Baby Payment in Australia in 2023-24 – but data is not available on how many times it was paid after an abortion.

"The medical eligibility component of 'stillbirth' is determined and declared by a medical professional," the spokesman said.

"Services Australia does not receive any detail on the nature of this determination.

"For circumstances that are not a stillbirth, such as abortions, supports are available through Services Australia including counselling and support to connect with local services."

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Ambos to get digital records

Kathryn Bermingham

The state's ambulance service has reached an important milestone in bringing on-road clinicians into the digital age.

Healthcare information systems company Dedalus has been named the contractor for the implementation of an electronic patient care record system.

The \$23.5m project, announced in the June budget, will equip ambulance crews with the capability to electronically document patient information for the first time.

It will eliminate the need for handwritten clinical case cards that require subsequent data entry.

In time, the system will be able to integrate with hospital electronic medical records to enhance communication between ambulance crews and hospital staff.

Health Minister Chris Picton said the investment would bring ambulance patient care records and ambulance data into the 21st century.

"This project is a game-changer for the SA Ambulance Service (SAAS), and builds on our government hiring more ambos and building and upgrading ambulance stations across the state," he said.

"We are providing our crews with the essential tools they need to excel in their roles and deliver lifesaving care to patients."

SAAS chief executive Rob Elliott said the shift from paper-based clinical records to a fully integrated electronic system will have "a significant and positive impact on our organisation".

"Our primary focus is on giving our workforce the tools and information they need," he said. "By implementing an electronic patient care record solution, we are enabling our clinicians to access and share critical clinical information seamlessly, which is essential for effective patient care and decision-making."

"We will also harness that data to be a more efficient and effective ambulance service."



Rob Elliott

First look at proposed new \$150m town centre for Two Wells



Impression of the proposed town centre at Two Wells.

Lyton Grace

New images have been revealed of the \$150m town centre proposal for Two Wells as the plans officially go on display for public consultation.

The 8ha development on the corner of Old Port Wakefield and Mallala roads will include a Drakes supermarket, two-storey medical centre, childcare centre and swim school, and multiple

specialty retail shops ranging from just 15 sqm to 650 sqm.

It will include landscaped open spaces, 359 carparks, a community-use hub and stormwater run-off basin.

The plans show the development would exceed local maximum building heights by about 4m at the highest point.

However, the documents say the building's height gradually increases, does not dominate the

landscape and is in proportion to the scale of the development.

An open landscaped area called Windmill Square is proposed at the northern entrance to serve as a focal point, beautify the site and create a welcoming gateway. It would also provide a community friendly space.

Drakes Supermarkets was chosen as the anchor tenant in September, to operate a new flagship supermarket at devel-

oper Leyton Property's centre. It will feature in the \$60m first stage of the project.

At 3500 sqm, it's likely to be one of the largest Drakes in SA.

Leyton Property managing director Hamish Brown said the supermarket and wider development would become the "destination of choice" in Adelaide's outer north, providing a vibrant hub in one of the state's fastest-growing regions.