

# INEQUITY IN ACCESS TO PREGNANCY RELATED SERVICES AND CONTRACEPTION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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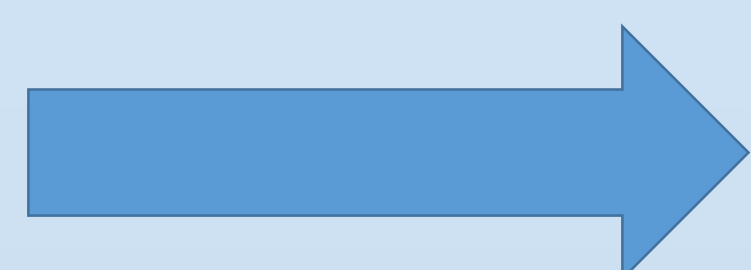
## BACKGROUND

Australian Federal Government Deed for the Provision of Overseas Student Health Cover stipulates the terms for health insurance providers.

It's designed to mirror Medicare.

The current Deed, revised in 2011, stipulates a 12 month waiting period for pregnancy related services for international students, including terminations and births.

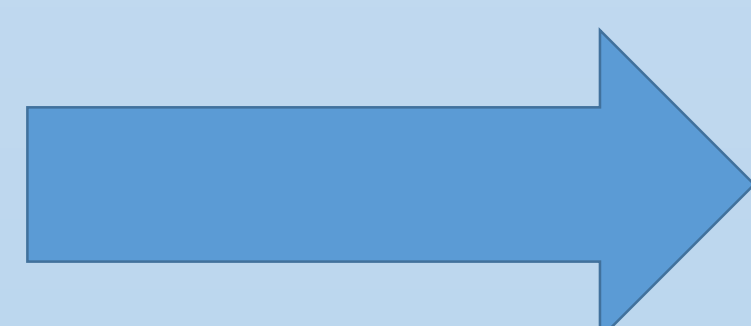
Deed also stipulates a cap on prescription reimbursements up to \$50.



## METHODS

Research interviews with 24 professionals in Australia was conducted via qualitative interviews in 2012 exploring sexual health and unplanned pregnancies amongst international students in Australia.

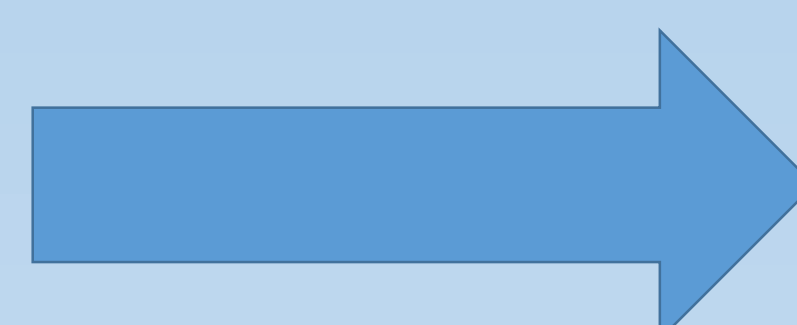
Also, in 2016 the cost of contraception for international students was investigated by calling local chemists near the Deakin campus, and ascertaining the cost of coverage for specific items and reimbursement methods, as well as confirming with insurance company websites and information lines the cap on the cost of prescription reimbursements.



## RESULTS

Interviews revealed that many students who experienced unplanned pregnancies immediately after the introduction of this Deed limitation in 2011 experienced extreme hardships, including difficulty covering the cost of terminations, mental health issues from repeat abortions, resorting to sex work to support unplanned pregnancies, and unwillingly placing their children for adoption.

The review of health insurance coverage of specific contraception revealed inequity, such as international students paying \$300 for the inter-uterine device (IUD) and get reimbursed \$50, paying \$250 out of pocket, while Australians pay \$37.50 out of pocket (or \$6 concession). Similarly, international students pay \$250 for the contraceptive implants (e.g.: Implanon) and get reimbursed approx. \$200, while Australians pay only \$37.50 out of pocket (or \$6 concession).



## CONCLUSION

Recommended revisions to the Deed include:

- eliminating the wait period for access to pregnancy related services (and slightly higher premiums if necessary)
- making separate and higher prescription reimbursement amounts for IUDs and contraceptive implants
- Investing an portion of overseas student health insurance premiums into health promotion to prevent unwanted pregnancies.



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