



Media Release

Senator Mathias Cormann

Liberal Senator for Western Australia

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Labor State Governments letting hospital patients down

WA Senator Mathias Cormann has attacked State Health Ministers across Australia for putting the political interests of the Labor Party ahead of the needs of public hospital patients.

“Funding for hospital treatment across Australia is set to reduce by a staggering \$2.7 billion as a result of federal changes to the Medicare Levy Surcharge,” Senator Cormann said.

“As a result of this change, a tsunami of additional demand will hit public hospitals across Australia. Yet, so far not one single State Government has made a submission to the Senate Committee investigating the impact of this measure on public hospitals. (Deadline was 7 July 2008).

The Senate Economics Committee will hear evidence in every capital city, starting in Perth on Tuesday.

“Every State Government has conceded that this change will put additional pressure on our public hospitals. But so far not one Labor State Government has gone beyond token resistance or restrained commentary over the weekend about ‘monitoring the impact’ moving forward.

“The budget papers are very clear and the recent Senate Estimates hearings revealed that based on the Federal Government’s own figures more than \$2.7 billion of funding for hospital treatment across Australia will be lost.

“Who will pick up that shortfall in funding for hospital treatment? The reality is this is a massive cost shift from the Federal Government and the privately insured onto the States.

“The Federal Government has already confessed that it did not model, cost or in any way assess the impact of this measure on public hospitals. But, State Governments have now had two months to have their actuaries, Treasury and Health officials run through the necessary modelling and forecasting.

“It is time that State Governments followed the lead of organisations like Catholic Healthcare Australia and provided some open and honest answers, including numbers.

“Every State Government should front the Senate inquiry and answer questions like:

- 1) Have you asked for and been given access to the Federal Government’s modelling of this measure to inform your own modelling of the impact on state public hospitals?
- 2) How much additional pressure do you expect on public hospitals as a result of this change?
- 3) How much will it cost to ensure no additional blow out in waiting lists and waiting times?
- 4) Have you already (or will you) ask for the necessary additional funding to ensure no blow out in waiting lists and waiting times as a result of this measure?
- 5) Or, alternatively, will you put your party political allegiances aside in the interests of Australians requiring timely access to quality hospital care and call on the Federal Government to reconsider this ill-thought out and short sighted measure?

“Australians will be badly served if Labor’s mantra of ‘ending the blame game’ means nothing more than hiding any difficult issues under a big State-Federal Labor carpet, Senator Cormann said.”

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