



# Media Release

## Senator Mathias Cormann

### *Liberal Senator for Western Australia*

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### **Queensland latest Labor State to go soft on Medicare issue**

WA Senator Mathias Cormann says he is stunned by the late withdrawal of Queensland health officials from a Senate inquiry into changes into the Medicare levy surcharge.

The officials were supposed to appear before the Senate Economic Committee to give evidence about how the change will impact on public hospitals in Queensland.

The withdrawal comes just five days after Queensland Health Minister Stephen Robertson attacked the changes in an article headlined "States to rebel on health charges". (The Australian, 12/7/08)

Committee member Senator Cormann says a pattern has emerged where State Health Ministers talked tough to their local media on the issue but failed to take up the fight to the Rudd government.

"Earlier this week we had Western Australian health officials turn up to the inquiry with an analysis based on Commonwealth figures which had been widely discredited weeks before-hand.

"Their Health Minister had talked tough about demanding Commonwealth compensation but their evidence massively under-stated the impact of this change.

"Today it's Queensland's turn. This change will see a tsunami of additional demand on public hospitals, particularly in a population growth State like Queensland.

"It's been two months since the change was announced. That is more than enough time for the States to assess the impact of the change or demand access to the Commonwealth's own modelling.

"But despite the tough talk from the Queensland Minister, today his officials are a no-show.

"Either they haven't done the work or alternatively they have done the figures and have decided not to embarrass their Federal masters by putting that evidence on the public record.

"Whichever way you look at it, the Bligh government has been negligent on this issue and Queenslanders are going to be left with a huge bill.

"Queensland governments have traditionally not been slow to take the fight up to Canberra. I doubt we would have seen this softly, softly approach ten months ago.

"It really is a weak and embarrassing performance by the Queensland Health Minister whose tough talk at the weekend has been exposed as being hollow and meaningless."

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