



Media Release

Senator Mathias Cormann

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health Administration

09/0223/M

24 February 2009

LABOR CRUSADE AGAINST PRIVATE HEALTH CONTINUES!

Labor's ideological crusade against private health will undermine the viability of the entire health system according to Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health Administration Mathias Cormann.

"Whatever the Prime Minister told us before the last election, undermining the viability of private health is part of Labor's DNA," Senator Cormann said.

His comments followed revelations of secret Treasury plans to scrap the private health rebate.

"I've been asking questions about this at every Senate Estimates since the election of the Rudd Labor Government," Senator Cormann said.

"It was very clear that officials were very coy in making any comments," he said.

"For pure political purposes the government was determined to cover up its true agenda, but the truth has now been revealed.

"Labor has form on this of course. This is what Labor does when it gets a chance at government.

"Last year Labor put its toe in the water in its ideological attack on private health, pushing through changes to the Medicare Levy Surcharge thresholds.

"We now know that that was only the beginning. There is no doubt, the private health insurance rebate and Lifetime health cover will be next on the list.

"Wayne Swan and Nicola Roxon will hide behind the excuse that this was the product of an independent bureaucracy, which they did not support. But Treasury would not have pushed this proposal if it didn't believe that the Government was receptive to an anti-private health view," Senator Cormann said.

"Australians expect us to put a policy framework in place that helps ensure timely access to quality health care. To achieve this, we need the right balance between a strong public and a strong private health system.

"Labor invariably fails to ensure that right balance," Senator Cormann said.

"During Labor's last period in government private health membership collapsed from 63% to end up at about 30%, putting enormous strains on an already overburdened public health system.

"Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it, and it will be Australians in desperate need of timely access to high quality health care that will pay the price," Senator Cormann said.

Media Contact: Senator Cormann – 02 6277 3457 – 0411 874 546