



Media Release

Senator Mathias Cormann

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health Administration

09/0421-2/M

21 April 2009

LABOR KEEPING PRIVATE HEALTH AGENDA SECRET!

What has the Rudd Government got to hide when it comes to private health insurance Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Mathias Cormann asked today.

"What is the Rudd Government's next strike in its ideological crusade against private health," he asked.

"The Rudd Government has been defying the Senate for more than a month now in refusing to release secret documents containing its private health insurance 'reform ideas'," Senator Cormann said.

The Senate passed the attached order on 11 March 2009.

On 16 March the Government made a statement in the Senate that:

*"The documents identified in the order are references to six files of the Department of Health and Ageing. The six files contain approximately 300 documents including cabinet documents and documents of a commercially sensitive nature. The contents of the files are currently being examined **and a response will be provided to the Senate as soon as possible.**"*

On 27 March the office of Health and Ageing Minister Nicola Roxon advised that the documents would be provided by 3pm that afternoon.

This was followed by advice later that day that the Minister herself needed to sign off on the release of the documents and that this would be 'fast tracked'.

"They had nearly six weeks to comply with the order now and the Minister is still covering up the Rudd Government's secret agenda on private health," Senator Cormann said.

"Australia needs both a well funded public and a well supported private health system.

"If the Rudd Government continues with its misguided attack on private health, more Australians will have to wait for longer to get access to the high quality health care they need," Senator Cormann said.

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ORDER OF THE SENATE PASSED ON 11 MARCH 2009

26 Health—Private health insurance—Reforms—Order for production of documents

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the Prime Minister's stated commitment before the 2007 Federal election that Federal Labor would retain the 'existing private health insurance rebates, including the 30 per cent general rebate and the 35 and 40 per cent rebates for older Australians' as well as the commitment to 'maintain Lifetime Health Cover and the Medicare Levy Surcharge',

(ii) the government's reaffirmation of those commitments during its first Senate Estimates as the new government in February 2008, and on other occasions,

(iii) revelations that since the election of the Rudd Government work has been done by both Treasury and the Department of Health and Ageing on options and/or recommendations for scrapping the private health insurance rebate and other options for change to the rebate and Lifetime Health Cover, and

(iv) the departmental records listing for the Department of Health and Ageing for the period 1 July 2008 until 31 December 2008 listing six specific ideas and policy development papers on changes to private health insurance in general and Lifetime Health Cover in particular;

(b) considers publication of those policy development ideas to be in the public interest; and

(c) orders that there be laid on the table by the Minister Representing the Minister for Health and Ageing by no later than 12 pm on 16 March, the following documents:

(i) 2008/039344 CARE & ACCESS - POLICY - Development - Private Health Insurance Reforms 2008 - Ideas Paper - ACPHI,

(ii) 2008/043077 CARE & ACCESS - POLICY - Development - Private Health Insurance Reforms 2008 - Ideas Paper - Pt2 - ACPHI,

(iii) 2008/048024 CARE & ACCESS - POLICY - Development - Private Health Insurance Reforms 2008 - Ideas Paper - Pt3 - ACPHI,

(iv) 2008/058144 CARE & ACCESS - POLICY - Development - Private Health Insurance Reforms 2008 - Ideas Paper - Pt4 - ACPHI,

(v) 2008/066297 CARE & ACCESS - POLICY - Development - Private Health Insurance Reforms 2008 - Policy Development & Implementation (PD&I) Section - ACPHI, and

(vi) 2008/021657 CARE & ACCESS - POLICY - Development - Lifetime Health Cover (LHC) - Loading Waiver Provision - Private Health Insurance Act 2007 - ACPHI.

(Motion of Senator Cormann agreed to 11 March 2009 .)