



Media Release

Senator Mathias Cormann

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health Administration

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Health Minister lied on private health rebates! Or is she just completely out of the loop?

Australians can't trust anything the Health Minister has to say on private health insurance according to Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health Administration Mathias Cormann.

"Either Nicola Roxon is completely out of the loop, or when questioned about the government's ongoing commitment to the private health rebates earlier in the year she was not prepared to tell the truth," Senator Cormann said.

"The Government is firmly committed to retaining the existing private health insurance rebates," Ms Roxon proclaimed in *The Age* on 24 February 2009.

Evidence at Senate Estimates has now revealed that at the exact time the Minister was making those statements, the Prime Minister's department was busy providing advice to the government about the specific proposal to slash private health rebates in the budget.

According to senior officials, the Prime Minister's department provided advice to government about the proposed budget measure to means test the private health rebates as far back as 23 February 2009.

"That's the same day the Minister was making her statement to *The Age* confirming the government's ongoing commitment to the rebate," Senator Cormann said.

"Either Nicola Roxon deliberately misled people, or she genuinely had no idea what was going on within the Rudd Labor government.

"Was the decision to pursue slashing the rebates and seek advice from departments about that proposed budget measure made by the Prime Minister and Treasurer without input from the Health Minister," he asked.

"Or did the Minister deliberately mislead people?"

"Before the last election we were accused of running a scare campaign because we dared question the sincerity of Labor's commitment to the private health rebates.

"Since then Minister Roxon and others have again and again reaffirmed the government's commitment to retain the existing rebates, including in *The Age* on 24 February this year.

"Clearly we cannot believe a word the Minister has to say about private health – either because she doesn't know what's going on in her portfolio, or if she does know because she is not prepared to tell us the truth," Senator Cormann said.

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