



Media Release

Senator Mathias Cormann

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health Administration

09/0906/M

9 June 2009

Coalition Senators to boycott rushed rebate inquiry!

Coalition Senators will not participate in Labor's rushed mini-Senate inquiry into the Rudd government's broken promise on private health insurance rebates.

"Labor is going ahead with its hastily convened partisan inquiry even though the Coalition made it very clear last week that we would not be party to such a charade," Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health Administration Mathias Cormann said.

"We have made it clear that when the Senate resumes next week we will be insisting on a proper inquiry in front of the appropriate Committee for such an important health policy issue," he said.

"Throughout the parliamentary process so far this has been handled by the Minister for Health and the appropriate Committee for health portfolio matters is the Community Affairs Committee.

"There is no proper reason to rush consideration of this legislation which is proposed to come into effect on 1 July 2010 before it has even been introduced into the Senate.

"We should be making proper use of the six week winter recess to conduct this inquiry, giving all relevant stakeholders an appropriate opportunity to comment and ensuring proper scrutiny.

"Health and Treasury department officials should be asked to appear after all other witnesses have given their evidence, so that any issues arising during the inquiry can be put to them for clarification.

"Many issues were raised during Senate Estimates last week and to this day none of the Senate Committee transcripts of Health and Treasury evidence have become available for review.

"None of the answers to questions taken on notice by the departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Health and Ageing, Treasury the ATO or Medibank Private last week have been provided so far. In fact only last Tuesday evening, the ATO had no idea how they would be implementing this measure in practice, saying in effect that it was too early to ask these questions.

"We understand why the government is so keen to minimise scrutiny of its broken private health insurance rebate promise.

"Nicola Roxon was caught out misleading people, reassuring them of the government's firm commitment to the rebate while at the same time pursuing plans to slash it behind closed doors.

"By this farcical inquiry, the Rudd government is seeking to circumvent and abuse proper Senate processes and we will not be party to that," Senator Cormann said.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Senator Cormann 08 9325 4227 or 0411 874 546