

Wednesday, 14 January 2015

Call for Senate to stop backdoor changes to Medicare

Australian Unions call on the Senate to overturn the Abbott Government's backdoor changes to Medicare rebates that will wipe out bulk billing and signal an end to universal healthcare in Australia.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said unions have today written to the Greens, Labor and crossbench Senators asking them to disallow the regulation Tony Abbott snuck through before Christmas.

"After failing to kill off Medicare with his GP co-payment, Tony Abbott is trying to do the same thing with this sneaky backdoor change that will see many patients slugged with a \$20 fee to visit the doctor," said Ms Kearney.

"The Senate has the power to reverse these changes with a disallowance motion and unions are urging all Senators to protect universal health care and ensure all Australians can access medical care – not just those who can afford it."

Ms Kearney said the backdoor tactics show it is business as usual for the Abbott Government.

"If there is a need for changes to Medicare, then it should be driven by and in consultation with the community.

"We should not pretend that a crude budget cut, driven by ideological opposition to universal health care, is really about improving patient care.

"When he was scraping off the barnacles last year, Tony Abbott promised to consult with the community in 2015 – less than two weeks into the new year and those words are already proven false.

"Nothing has changed – it's a new year but the same old Abbott Government with its agenda to drive down the living standards of all Australians, whether by dismantling Medicare or slugging university students with mortgage sized debt."

As well as writing to the Senate, the ACTU today launched a petition urging Senators to disallow the changes to the Medicare rebate regulations when the Parliament resumes.

The petition is online at: www.australianunions.org.au/medicare

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