



Australian Society of Ophthalmologists

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Society of Ophthalmologists Incorporated ABN 29 454 001 424

Monday 7 February 2011

FUNDING BACKFLIP IS MORE BAD NEWS FOR PATIENTS: ASO

The chance of patients seeing improvements in service delivery in our public hospitals any time soon is remote, according to the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO).

The ASO says news the Federal Government may backflip on its key funding reform effort (to transfer 60 per cent of public hospital funding responsibility to the Commonwealth) indicates a lack of commitment from Prime Minister Julia Gillard to fix our broken hospital system.

“This is just another lob back over the fence in the to-ing and fro-ing between Commonwealth and State that has always been at the heart of the system’s downfall,” ASO President Dr Bradley Horsburgh said.

“Labor’s health reform agenda was meant to finally put an end to cost and blame shifting by making the Commonwealth the driver of public hospital funding,” he said.

“There has been a huge investment made by many, principally through the Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to identify the changes necessary. This now appears to be trashed.”

“By scaling back its commitment from 60 per cent to 40 per cent, the Government is ensuring the old issues of accountability that inhibit the system’s management so much remain.”

The ASO says the Prime Minister’s decision to backtrack on the funding arrangement would have severe repercussions, and yet only yesterday the Prime Minister assured the Australian public she is more about outcomes than style. This, if it is true, is a disastrous outcome.

“Aside from a likely continuation of the clunky and defective management of our hospitals as a result of this decision, the problem of attracting doctors to work in our public hospitals is only going to be exacerbated by it,” Dr Horsburgh said.

“The Federal Government’s reform agenda had signaled to the medical profession a true willingness to make significant changes that would commence the process of fixing the system,” Dr Horsburgh said.

“But this backflip shows a weakened commitment to that. I would see more doctors turning their backs on work in the public hospital system in response to this decision,” he said.

“And fewer doctors in our public hospitals is definitely the last thing we need.”

Ends..

Contact: *ASO President Dr Brad Horsburgh 0417 790 313*

ASO Media Advisor Sarah Todman on 0425 883 304

All correspondence: PO Box 1300 Spring Hill Qld 4004

President: Dr Brad Horsburgh Ph: 07 3831 3004 / Fax: 07 3831 3005