

Labor Senators' Additional Comments

1.1 Labor Senators agree that there is potential benefit where private health funds work with bodies, such as Medicare Locals, to partner and trial models of healthcare that promote prevention and better coordination of chronic disease but have concerns that the payment of an 'administrative fee' by Medibank Private directly to general practices goes well beyond this and could lead to an inequitable health system.

1.2 Labor Senators are of the view that the trial has the potential to unfairly disadvantage Australians who choose not to or cannot afford private health insurance and to undermine Australia's universal health insurance scheme - Medicare.

1.3 Labor Senators are also of the view that the Medibank Private trial has the potential to act in an inflationary manner on fees currently charged by general practice over and above the MBS fee.

1.4 Given the contentious nature of this trial the Government should release the legal advice obtained by the Department of Health that demonstrates that the trials are compliant with the *Private Health Insurance Act 2007* and *Health Insurance Act 1973*.

1.5 If it is unable to do so then the Minister for Health should make a Ministerial Statement as to why he believes the trials are compliant with the existing legislation.

1.6 Labor Senators agree however, that the Bill may have unintended consequences and whilst supporting the intent of the Bill cannot support it in its current form.

1.7 Labor Senators do not share the Government Senators' view that the Bill is not in the best interests of Australian healthcare consumers. Labor Senators agree with some of the principles of the Bill and its intent to protect Australians who cannot afford or choose not to have private health insurance. Labor Senators note some of the unintended consequences of the Bill and have concerns about the manner in which it has been drafted.

Senator Carol Brown

Senator Nova Peris OAM

Senator the Hon Jan McLucas

Senator Claire Moore