STEPHEN JONES, SHADOW ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR HEALTH: After exhausting every other option, the Government has finally decided to do the right thing and dump the GP Tax. Let’s be quite clear about this - it is not the health of the nation that the Government is concerned about, but the health of the Prime Minister’s leadership. It’s quite clear that after four health polices in four months, the Government is in complete disarray. When they dump the GP Tax this week we expect them to have a clear outline of what they are going to do for Medicare and what they are going to do for primary care in this country. This is the number one issue; when people will be going to the polls this year or next year, people want to know what the Government’s plans are for Medicare.

JOURNALIST: Data retention is on the agenda again are you happy that Labor appears to have waved that through?

JONES: We haven’t waved it through at all. There are 37 recommendations that were put through, pushed by Labor, at the Standing Committee into Intelligence Matters. We have also put a big red circle around the issue of journalists and the important issue of data retention for journalist information - this is going to be subject to a further inquiry. So far from just waving things through, you will see much tougher requirements when it comes to privacy arrangements and much closer scrutiny when it comes to parliamentary oversight.
JOURNALIST: Are you worried that Labor’s lead has narrowed in this morning’s poll?

JONES: Look I’ll leave it to you guys to comment on the polls. On any fair analysis after the last election people were saying that Labor will be out for decades, what we see though is that that the next election is going to be a very competitive one indeed. It’s going to be fought over issues like health and who has got the best plan for health? Who has got the best plan for education? Who has got a plan for jobs in the future, including jobs for people leaving school? Who has the best plan for the economy in the interests of ordinary working people?

JOURNALIST: Do you have any details on Labor’s policy to crack down on multinationals avoiding tax?

JONES: My colleague Andrew Leigh will be talking a little bit more about that this morning and the leader will be making an announcement a little bit later today. But one thing you can be sure of, is that Labor has got its priorities right. Instead of giving $1 billion tax cuts to multinationals, we will be cracking down on multinational tax avoidance.

JOURNALIST: Is Labor ready to have a good look at the Intergenerational Report and go away and formulate some tough policies that tackle [inaudible] ageing population and those other problems that we already know about?

JONES: Of course we will be looking at the Intergenerational Report; we will be ensuring that we have got budget and policy settings that are fit for the long term. But the way we will do it will be a reflection of our values and putting the interests of ordinary working people first. Not things like giving multinational companies and the wealthiest people in this country the tax cuts whilst hitting those who are struggling the most.

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACT: JOHN RONAN 0408 542 547