



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

National Cervical Screening Program

SPEECH

Wednesday, 1 March 2017

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Ryan, Joanne, MP

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Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (10:29): I rise today to speak about the government's bungling of the life-saving Cervical Screening Program. This is the program that, of course, was tendered to Telstra Health. This is something that has been swept under the rug by this government. They are yet to tell women that their mishandling of the new test rollout will mean that women are going to face significant delays before they are able to access the potentially life-saving screening program. The screening test was due to replace the Pap smear from 1 May, with the new test estimated to cut the rates of cervical cancer by as much as 30 per cent, preventing around 140 cases of cervical cancer every year. In anticipation of the test starting on 1 May, the existing Pap smear program is being wound down across the country. There are now serious concerns that the delay could see a backlog of unprocessed Pap smear tests from May. The new test will not be ready on 1 May. People are shedding their workforce on the old test. It is expected that only one in five pathologists—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 10:30 to 10:50

Ms RYAN: Before the suspension, I was talking about the shedding of staff as one program winds down and the other has been bungled and is not yet set to start. How often have we heard that early detection is critical in cancer treatment? Experts are warning that lives could be at risk. Cervical cancer claims the lives of 250 Australian women each year, leaving pathologists and medical experts fearing that delays in detecting the diseases will have dire consequences.

Taxpayers are paying this corporation \$220 million to construct a register that will not be delivered on time. The Australian people were told that the Liberal government would not be privatising the healthcare system. I distinctly remember, in the campaign in the last election, those opposite saying we are not privatising the system. Well, this part of the system has been privatised and now it has failed to meet its first benchmark, to meet a target in a critical area that has dire consequences for women's health.

Their ideas about letting the market deal with anything—Australian women need their attention on this. They need to solve this problem immediately. They need to make sure that these pap smears are dealt with and dealt with in a timely fashion.