



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Greenway Electorate: Medicare Office

SPEECH

Thursday, 27 March 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 27 March 2014
Page 3458
Questioner
Speaker Rowland, Michelle, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (10:13): I rise to raise the issue of the recent action by the Minister for Human Services and self-appointed Liberal 'duty senator' for Greenway, Senator Payne, to close Blacktown's Medicare office on Saturdays. This is a callous decision. It is going to have an extremely detrimental impact on my constituents and it reflects on a government that is completely out of touch with the community. They are more concerned with introducing an archaic honours system than improving services in Blacktown and Western Sydney in general.

I am quite outraged about this not only because of the substance of this action but because of the way it has come about. The minister has cut this service to my constituents—another broken promise from this government which promised not to cut health services—but the minister and her office did not even have the courtesy to inform me as the local member. It is not like she is any stranger to Blacktown. I have before me, and I am very happy to table it if anyone wants me to, a picture of Minister Payne who at the time was also the self-appointed 'duty senator' out doing the campaign launch for Jaymes Diaz in Greenway, so it is not like she does not know where we are. She is very happy to go and hang out with Jaymes Diaz, but she cannot do the right thing—the courteous thing—and let the local member know about this.

It stands in stark contrast to when Labor was in government. We recognised in particular that working families need accessibility; they need to have opportunities where they can access these services. Thanks to a community campaign by residents in the north of my electorate—around Stanhope Gardens, The Ponds and Kellyville Ridge—where the nearest Medicare offices are a fair distance away, either in Castle Hill or in Blacktown, we opened a new Medicare kiosk in Rouse Hill to make it accessible for them. Minister Kim Carr came out and, within about a week, he was able to tell me that it had far exceeded expectations.

What kind of a government operates like this? It was a sneaky, mean move by a government with very twisted priorities. My constituents who work Monday to Friday and cannot get to their Medicare office during the week rely on it to be open on Saturdays. This decision was made without prior community consultation and without even informing the local member. If the minister or anyone thinks that all these services can be delivered online they are plain wrong. As has been pointed out by some of my colleagues, when you need to perform certain functions you need to go in in person. This is an outrageous decision by a government with very twisted priorities.