



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE BILL 2006

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE (TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2006

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE (PROSTHESES APPLICATION AND LISTING FEES) BILL 2006

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE (COLLAPSED ORGANIZATION LEVY) AMENDMENT BILL 2006

**PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE
COMPLAINTS LEVY
AMENDMENT BILL 2006**

**PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE
(COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION
LEVY) AMENDMENT BILL 2006**

**PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE
(REINSURANCE TRUST FUND
LEVY) AMENDMENT BILL 2006**

In Committee

SPEECH

Friday, 23 March 2007

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

Date Friday, 23 March 2007
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Questioner
Speaker McLucas, Sen Jan

Source Senate
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (11.00 am)—I move opposition amendment (1) on sheet 5218:

(1) Clause 14, page 10 (lines 23 to 25), omit the clause, substitute:

14 Quality assurance requirements

The quality assurance requirements in Division 81 of the new Act commence on 1 April 2007 and apply to any insurance policy already in existence.

This amendment goes to the issue of the quality assurance that new products will require. The bill recognises that there will be, over time, the development of new products that will require a quality assurance regime. Unfortunately, the government has not recognised that we do require quality assurance systems to protect consumers in effect from the day of operation. The Labor Party amendment requires that quality assurance requirements in division 81 of the act commence on 1 April 2007. People will say, ‘Goodness, that’s only a couple of weeks away.’ My answer to that is that the government should have thought of that before we embarked down this road. Consumer protection and quality assurance should be fundamental to our health system.

We know, and the government have known, that we have to have a quality assurance system in place. However, they are comfortable it would seem, to trundle along, roll out new products, allow new treatment systems to develop and have a quality assurance system on 1 July 2008. That is not consumer protection in our view and that is why we are moving this amendment, which would require quality assurance systems to be in place on 1 April 2007. If the government has a view that that date needs to be put out for, say, a month then I would be interested in hearing it and we would be happy to accommodate that sort of amendment. But to exist in an environment for over 12 months without a quality assurance system is not reasonable.

The Senate committee recommended that to demonstrate a commitment to quality improvement and to guarantee patient safety, existing quality assurance, professional standards and accreditation regimes should continue to apply to broader health cover services until alternative accreditation or equivalent arrangements have been put in place under this legislation. I think the government can read that as code for the committee expressing their concern about what seems to be an extraordinary oversight in the development of this legislation. As I said, we would be happy to accommodate perhaps a slightly later start-up time for a quality assurance regime, but leaving it until 1 July 2008 simply indicates that the government did not think this one through before developing this package of legislation.