

Thank you delegates,

I'm not sure how you feel but this morning when I got up and read the Australian and saw that load of crap on front of the page there about John Howard's propaganda about Public Health that made me pretty angry.

It made our members angry - health workers angry. It is unbelievable that he is prepared to spend this sort of money producing untruths when we all know the crisis's that our hospitals are going through and our aged care facilities are going through and the need they have for this sort of cash.

Delegates, if you haven't screwed it up, chuck it away it's not worth a thing.

I'm sick and tired of this mean spirited Mr Magoo of a Prime Minister that we have. He keeps on trying to shift the burden from the well off to ordinary hard working people - the people who need support.

At the moment we're finding many aged care facilities where there aren't enough staff to actually walk patients who need to be walked. There aren't enough staff to have patients showered who need to be showered. It's an absolutely disgrace that we have a government that presides over an aged care system that is in crises and does nothing to fix the problems.

This policy, the ACTU's policy, states that we need to have minimum staffing levels in Aged Care. We have incredibly regulated Aged Care industry but the one area that is not regulated is staffing levels. There is only one way we can guarantee to make sure that people are looked after properly in residential cares - the only way you can guarantee that is by making sure that there are enough people to look after residents in the first place. It's a great thing that this policy puts that in to the place.

Lets then turn to where we are with Australian Health Care Agreements and funding of public hospitals. We have the absent Health Minister Kay Patterson trying to shuffle her way around her portfolio. I mean quite frankly delegates she should resign. She does nothing, she won't turn up to the meetings, and she won't negotiate.

We think she should go - if she is not up to the job - she doesn't want to do the job then get out. Let someone else do it that is capable of at least sitting down, negotiating, making sure there is enough money to put in public hospitals rather than wasting money on these ridiculous ads that we saw in today's papers. When you go to public hospitals you see emergency rooms overcrowded. The ambulances are waiting in the bays not having been able to go out to deliver emergency services because there isn't enough money going to public hospitals from the commonwealth and there is too many people turning up in public hospital's emergency departments because they can't get bulk billing in there local area.

We need to make sure that bulk billing is restored and Medicare is brought back and we have health system that's for all Australians not just those who can pay. We need Medicare because John Howard doesn't care. That's up to all of us to make sure this a fight that goes across the whole union movement, to make sure we can preserve Medicare, to make sure we have effective public hospitals that provide quality care for all.