



Speech By  
**Hon. Cameron Dick**


**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Medicare, Review**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.57 am): In April this year the federal coalition government announced that it would review the schedule of items covered by Medicare, and last month the federal government commenced a public consultation process in relation to the review. Medicare, of course, is the central pillar of the Australian health system. While it is a federal government responsibility, its operation has a direct impact on the way that Queensland runs its health system. As a government, we have no problem with a review if it is designed to deliver efficiencies and support the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders. There are some 5,700 items on the Medicare schedule, and reviewing how those items are being used could help support better health outcomes.

As a government we support evaluation of government programs to see if they are fulfilling their aims, but in this case I am suspicious about the motives of a federal government that has proved time and time again that it cannot be trusted with health. In announcing the review, the federal health minister claimed that 30 per cent of health expenditure is wasted. Before the review even starts, it seems the federal government has a position that 30 per cent of procedures currently allowed under Medicare will be cut. Why have a review if you already believe that 30 per cent of the services are wasted? Why have a review when you have already made up your mind?

This government shares the concerns of the Australian Medical Association that this review is another way of cutting funding and cost shifting health expenditure from the Commonwealth to the states. The federal health minister said, 'We will realise efficiencies,' and then, 'We will reinvest into the government's bottom line.' This review appears to be designed to deliver a smaller list of procedures, not necessarily a better list. The risk inherent in such a review is that it is all about shifting the diagnostic burden to state systems. As a state government we support a more efficient system that is designed to make Queenslanders and Australians healthier, but we cannot support yet another cost-cutting measure in health.

The Australian Medical Association is suspicious. The AMA's federal president, Brian Owler, has stated that the federal government's comments were 'a direct attack on the integrity of the profession' and one which 'undermined the confidence that patients have in their doctors'. So the position of this government and the AMA is exactly the same: we do not want to see any more health cuts by stealth in this state.