



Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

C/- PO Box 280 Deakin West ACT 2600 ABN 64 051 645 674
www.healthreform.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE 22 February 2013

Consumers real losers in misguided hospital funding debacle

“Consumers again ended up with the worst outcomes from the unnecessary politically inspired stoush between the Federal and Victorian Governments over hospital funding,” said Tony McBride, Chair of the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance (AHCRA).

“Sadly both governments, as well as the Victorian hospitals, were more interested in playing politics than considering the needs of consumers. The Federal Government was playing tricky accounting to try and meet an unattainable Budget surplus, the Victorians applied the financial pressure to the hospitals rather than to themselves (note comparison with the banks here), and the hospitals played partisan politics.

They complain about the Federal cut whilst remaining relatively quiet about the fivefold larger Victorian Government cuts. Frankly, consumers will wish a pox on all their houses.”

Despite some of the successes of health reform (i.e., increased dental and mental health services) this stoush illustrates two failures of health reform.

First, the Blame Game is clearly alive and well. Unless responsibilities are much more starkly delineated and clarified, then clearly politicians will think it advantageous to play the Blame Game.

Second, politicians are still hypnotised by hospitals. To use an old analogy, AHCRA believes they are still overly-focused on the bottom of the cliff, providing dangerously escalating health service funding, rather than shifting attention to mending the fences at the top of the cliff. This means preventing ill-health, stronger primary health care and early intervention services, and more broadly addressing the social determinants of health that are the underlying causes of ill-health and especially inequity.

* AHCRA advocates for a fairer health system. It is a coalition of about 30 national and state peak health groups, including those representing the

medical profession, nursing, allied health, the rural health sector, as well as consumer groups.

Tony McBride is available for interview on mobile 0407 531 468