



SENATOR THE HON ANNE RUSTON

SHADOW MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE

SHADOW MINISTER FOR DISABILITY AND THE NDIS

SHADOW MINISTER FOR SPORT

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE

TRANSCRIPT

SKY NEWS WITH JAYNIE SEAL

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Topics: Labor's aged care broken promise that is short-changing older Australians, heatwave

E&OE.....

JAYNIE SEAL: A Senate estimates hearing into aged care this week revealed 93% of Support at Home packages issued this financial year have been interim packages, providing only 60% of the care an older Australian has been assessed as requiring. Well, for more joining us live is Senator Anne Ruston, Shadow Health and Aged Care Minister. Senator, thank you so much for joining us. You were at that Senate estimates hearing. My understanding is there is no back pay for these people on these packages and there was no warning. Is that correct?

Anne Ruston: That's absolutely right. We'd been hearing some concerns raised by the sector that these packages – there were interim packages being released into the market, but it wasn't until this week we realised that 93% of them – so just about every [Support at Home] package that the Government has released since making a promise because they were forced into doing it by the Coalition during a debate on the Bill – that 93%, as I say, almost all of them, have been released at 60%. That's 60% for probably three months or so for most people, and it could be longer. There is no back pay or people can't catch up what they've missed out on in that time. I mean, this is just a blatant broken promise. They hid this from everybody, and it was only when we prosecuted this in estimates that we even found out that they've been short-changing 93% of older Australians [on new Support at Home packages] the entire time.

JAYNIE SEAL: And my understanding as well, Senator, is that these packages, the people on them were means tested, so to have that taken away, what's been the reaction?

Anne Ruston: Well look, obviously, I would say to any older Australian who's been given an interim package, they should be having their say to their local Member of Parliament and they should be contacting the Minister. Because, quite clearly, there was an expectation of the

promise back in August when they agreed to release these packages that they wouldn't be interim packages, they would be full packages. I mean, this is tantamount to the Government has assessed these people as needing a certain level of care, and then the Government is rationing how much care that they get. I mean, it's outrageous. I mean, you wouldn't ration the amount of care that you gave to a patient who was receiving treatment for cancer and say, well you can only have 60% of it because, you know, we don't quite have enough. I mean, here is a government who made a whole heap of promises in the election campaign, quite clearly have underfunded them and are now making older Australians pay for the fact that their bottom line is in trouble. I mean, this is just disgraceful.

JAYNIE SEAL: And I guess this impacts providers as well.

Anne Ruston: Absolutely, and providers have constantly been the scapegoat for the Government's failures. Every time the Government's not ready or every time the Government doesn't have enough money, they're very quick to blame the sector. Well, the sector have been very clear that they've been ready to deliver these new packages when they were rolled out. So, this has quite clearly now belled the cat on the fact that the Government underfunded aged care packages, the ones that were promised. I mean, these packages aren't even going to get rid of the waiting list. This is only going to go part way to getting rid of the waiting list, and even then they're only funding them at 60%. So I think the Government needs to come clean with Australians that they think their bottom line's more important than delivering care to older Australians.

JAYNIE SEAL: And Senator, I wanted to ask you about the heat and the fires that we've got this weekend, very hot conditions. Heat waves are the deadliest weather events in Australia and as the Shadow Health and Aged Care Minister, what do you recommend people do who are experiencing these hot conditions?

Anne Ruston: Well, obviously, if you're in a bushfire area, the most important thing is to listen to what your emergency services personnel are telling you to do and make sure that if you're staying, your fire plan is in order and if you're leaving, leave early. But for every other Australian, I mean there are some pretty simple things that you always need to do. Make sure that you've got sun protection on. Hopefully, you know, long sleeves and a hat when you go outside. Make sure that you're hydrated, look after yourself and your family and your pets and make sure that they're all protected. And most importantly, as I said, always listen to what the emergency services or the health personnel are telling you to make sure that we keep you and your family safe.

JAYNIE SEAL: We certainly can't hear that enough, can we? We really appreciate your time today, Senator Anne Ruston. Thank you.

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