



THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP

Minister for Health
Minister for Sport

TRANSCRIPT

**Interview on 2ue Afternoons with Justin Smith
Thursday, 3 September**

Subjects: Subjects: Medicare annual figures, Medicare sustainability.

Justin Smith: You may have seen this story today that patients could be encouraged to do their own health checks like blood pressure, diabetes checks, things like that, a bit of a DIY health check. There was a picture in the paper today, I saw Federal Health Minister Sussan Ley talking about it. She's on the line, hi Minister.

Sussan Ley: Hello Justin.

Justin Smith: Sorry my breath is still a little gone. It's good to have you on. How have you been, alright?

Sussan Ley: Oh, really well and if you don't want to talk I can talk under wet cement so...

Justin Smith: [Laughs]

Sussan Ley:...you can really catch your breathe.

Justin Smith: Well, if you could, explain to me the- how the DIY health check works because I guess for the last few years we've been warned against going on the internet and looking at Dr Google and getting that- that's not this is it?

Sussan Ley: Not at all. This is nothing to do with Dr Google and this is part of a discussion paper that recognises, with the increasing role of technology and young people, the I generation, has wrist bands, they have apps and they're in a perfect position, where it's sensible, to monitor their own health. For example, response for allergies, difficult- blood sugar is coming to mind, if you want to make a record of what your sugars are during the course of the day, a week, a month, your doctor gets to see that, you're in partnership always with your GP when you're using technology to make sure that that person, that doctor is at the centre of your care...

Justin Smith: Yeah.

Sussan Ley:...so this is not about outsourcing medical care and it is part of what I think has been a really good discussion process about how we better look after people with chronic and complex disease.

Justin Smith: How would the AMA feel about this? How do the GPs feel?

Sussan Ley: Well, I know that I've been determined to keep GPs and consumers or patients at the table with all of this consultation so this interest in technology is something that's shared by many younger GPs who I talk to and I certainly recognise that they should always be where there is a team of people looking after the patient. The way you can motivate that patient to do the best for themselves is vital because ultimately it's them that decides what they eat, how often they exercise, how they rely on medication and how they report their own health back to their doctor or their allied health professional. It might be in the case of mental health, it might be a psychologist, it might be a dietician but always the doctor is at the centre of patient care.

Justin Smith: Is this a little bit more pointed towards younger people? Older people, with anything that pushes them away from human contact when it comes to medical care, they feel a little uneasy about so is it more for young people?

Sussan Ley: Look, in general, I would say yes but my father is 96. He wouldn't...

Justin Smith: Wow.

Sussan Ley:...mind me saying that he is a Type 2 diabetic. He's also...

Justin Smith: Yeah.

Sussan Ley:...a really good user of the computer. So, he actually writes down his blood sugars and if I was to say to him look, there's an app and your doctor can log in or it can spark an alert in your doctor's surgery if something's not going well, he would love to participate in that. Likewise, there are people who, because of their own anxiety, whatever age, they need to talk to someone. They need to talk to someone face to face quite regularly. Again, those are decisions that doctors can make in partnership with their patients.

Justin Smith: There's a small cynic inside me Minister that says we talk about health funding a lot, more on a state level, we've got concerns about ambulance response times, we've got concerns about ramping at emergency departments at hospitals and beds and this problem as you – I'm not telling you anything, this keeps coming up over and over again, is this kind of thing going to help it or hurt it?

Sussan Ley: Well, it's probably not entirely relevant to that and I don't...

Justin Smith: Okay.

Sussan Ley:...I don't run the state hospital sector...

Justin Smith: No, I know, I know. I know.

Sussan Ley:...but Justin, I'm not passing the buck. What I'm saying to my state health ministers is I appreciate the pressure you're under with people coming to ED, with all sorts of difficult presentations but I know that many of them are avoidable and what we need to do in partnership and we've taken some good steps in this direction is work together to keep people out of hospitals.

Justin Smith: Yes.

Sussan Ley: \$7 billion a year worth of avoidable hospital presentations in emergency. People that, for example, have let something get out of control, haven't managed it well, haven't kept in close touch with their GP and as a result have gone to emergency, they form part of that really difficult task of managing a public hospital and the conversations I am having with state ministers

is all about making that task easier and making the health system more efficient and most importantly better for the patient.

Justin Smith: Minister, I thank you very much for having a talk to me again, I've got my breath back.

Sussan Ley: Good [laughs].

Justin Smith: But I wanted to mention something else to you just very quickly. I just wanted to tell you – I'm not asking you a question, I just wanted to tell you that the last time we spoke it was about the IEM Grant...

Sussan Ley: That's right.

Justin Smith:...and you reversed the decision that was made and I just wanted to congratulate you again and tell you that a couple of hours ago a father approached me here at Barangaroo and had sent an email earlier in the day but he works nearby and approached me and the difference that you've made by reversing that decision is unbelievable in their lives so it's I – it's something you should feel very good about and I thank you again.

Sussan Ley: Well, thank you very much Justin and I remind myself and you telling me that reminds me that we build this system for the patients. That's who...

Justin Smith: Yeah.

Sussan Ley:...we're here for and that's where this significant investment of taxpayer dollars goes to help people get well or stay well or get better.

Justin Smith: Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for your time. I appreciate it.

Sussan Ley: Thanks Justin.

Justin Smith: Sussan Ley, the Minister for Health and I thank her very much for her time.

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