



THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP

Federal Minister for Health
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Patients shouldn't be held ransom in private health 'Game of Thrones': Ley

Patient safety and welfare should be the priority in any negotiations between private hospitals and health insurers, not used as ransom in a cynical "Game of Thrones", Federal Minister for Health Sussan Ley said today.

Minister Ley fired the warning shot at both sectors as she announced the fast-tracking of a clinician-led national review currently being undertaken to identify a list of high-priority complications in hospitals that will help improve patient safety and internal systems.

Minister Ley said she hoped fast-tracking the finalisation of the review would avoid patients and consumers being subjected to a repeat of the "grandstanding" exhibited by various self-interested parties involved in current contract disputes over who was responsible for covering the cost of patient complications and hospital re-admissions.

"Improving medical procedures and accountability should ultimately be about better safety for patients, not an excuse for private hospitals and health insurers to use patient welfare as a commodity for trade.

"This expert list will provide clear guidance for hospitals on ways to improve medical systems and identify areas for improvement to the benefit of patients.

"It will also help provide clarity for those private hospitals and health insurers who should, as a matter of course, be putting patient safety at the forefront of their contractual arrangements.

"If expediting this list helps improve patient safety faster, and in turn provides greater certainty and stability for the private hospital and health insurance sectors, then that's a positive.

"Hopefully it'll also help end the current cynical Game of Thrones where certain private health insurers and hospitals are more focussed on painting each other as villains rather than supporting patients.

“However, I stress again that it is inappropriate for the Government to be directly intervening in individual private contract negotiations.

“If patients are unhappy with private health insurance providers and hospitals that play tug-o-war over their membership dollars then the strongest message they can send is to vote with their feet and find a better deal.”

Minister Ley said the review, ordered by in 2012 and currently being overseen by the national hospital safety regulator, was set up to develop a national list of high-priority hospital complications to be used by hospitals as a tool to flag potential areas for internal investigation and, if required, safety and quality improvement.

The list was not due to be finalised until 2016, however testing of the list’s effectiveness in a wider group of public and private hospitals will now be fast-tracked over the next few months, with the aim for it to now be completed December 2015.

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