



Media release
14 October 2026

Senate move to block private health insurance rebate cuts a win for older Australians; Government urged to listen

The Senate's decision to block the Federal Government's proposed cuts to the private health insurance rebate is a win for older Australians, COTA Australia says.

Senators from across the chamber today backed a motion to remove the Bill from the Senate's agenda.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Officer Patricia Sparrow said it was heartening that Parliament had listened to the concerns of older Australians, particularly those on low and fixed incomes.

"Parliament has listened to the concerns of older Australians and the evidence put forward in the Inquiry, and we're urging the Federal Government to do the same," Ms Sparrow said.

"With the Minister signalling his intention to reintroduce the Bill, we urge the Government to seriously consider the concerns raised by older Australians and ensure any future changes don't leave them worse off.

"Our research showed just how devastating these changes could be, with older Australians telling us they would be forced to cut back on food, medicines, healthcare and other essentials just to keep their private health insurance.

"One in three told us they would cancel or change their cover altogether. That's not just a concern for older Australians, but for everyone who relies on our already stretched public health system.

Ms Sparrow said the Government's attempts to link the proposed rebate cuts to aged care funding presented a false choice.

"Older Australians shouldn't have to choose between protecting their health and paying for everyday essentials. Nor should they be asked to choose between affordable healthcare and a properly funded aged care system. It was pleasing to hear Minister Butler reaffirm the Government's commitment to aged care funding today.

"We thank the Senators who listened to older Australians and acted on their concerns. Today's decision sends a clear message that the impact on older Australians, particularly those on low and fixed incomes, cannot be ignored."

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