

## Why scrape the barnacles off a ship of fools?

Written by The Conversation

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*“Only a fool learns from his own mistakes. The wise man learns from the mistakes of others.” - Otto von Bismarck*

So as well as deciding to financially kneecap bulk-billing GPs, the Federal Government has also decided to ignore the lessons of recent history and the evidence of those who would know and [have DSP recipients &lsquo;assessed&rsquo;](#) by doctors hired for the purpose.

Hands up any of the peak medical, welfare or disability groups who lobbied for this?

Anyone?

Didn't think there were any.

I won't reiterate [my reasons](#) for thinking that this is a brain dead idea. It can only be seen as a direct insult to GPs and DSP applicants. The Minister reckons they busted welfare fraudsters worth \$9m last year. The Government would make twice that back just by getting one or two high net-worth individuals to pay their taxes properly. Or, dare I say it, have a few less expensive overseas trips or fancy dinners themselves. No. it's not a savings measure at all. It will cost much more than it saves, once all the appeals and reinstatements of entitlements are done. It may even cost some lives, if the experience of a similar scheme in the UK is anything to go by.

The supposed rationale for the GP Tax 2.0 has been shredded enough by columnists within this website alone. You don't need me to point out that telling GPs they are to become the new tax collectors and then telling them in effect that they can't be trusted to report their patients' DSP applications accurately is going to rile a few of them up. Especially when everyone who is anyone working in the field are telling them this is a better system than the last time they had Commonwealth-appointed doctors doing the assessments.

But it seems that the Minister knows best. Just like the Health Minister knows best that

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Co-payment 2.0 will in some way 'strengthen' Medicare. I'm not sure when 'strengthening' became the new euphemism for 'ripping money out of'. If [there wasn't a funding crisis](#) in GPIand before, there [certainly is now](#)

So why would a Government ignore all these frontline professionals and press on with these health and welfare policies that nobody wants? Why would they punish the most cost-effective sector of Medicare when there is no particular problem there? It's not as though nobody has tried to tell them it's a really bad idea.

I can only conclude that they sincerely and honestly believe they know better than the experts. My fear is that it will take millions of dollars and thousands of distressed people subjected to indignity and uninformed misjudgement before they work out that they should have listened to the professionals. You know, the ones who are there every day doing this stuff for a living? If this group of politicians feel they need to learn on the job by wasting precious resources and ruining the lives of vulnerable Australians in the name of abstract economic ideas, then the barnacles on the hull are not the problem. They are, by Bismarck's definition, a ship of fools.

*Michael Vagg does not work for, consult to, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has no relevant affiliations.*

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