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Labor fails to deliver ‘safe, high-quality care’ they promised

Deputy Speaker, Labor never misses an opportunity for self-congratulation, and this motion is another outstanding example of back-slapping by those opposite. Today, I want to focus my attention on their claim that they are delivering the safe, high-quality care that our older Australian’s deserve.

As Australians would recall, in the lead-up to the 2022 election, Prime Minister Albanese and Minister Wells stood up in front of the media, day after day, promising that things will be better under a government they lead.

‘We can do better than this,’ Mr Albanese said.

‘I will make it the Labor Government’s mission to fix this,’ he said.

Deputy Speaker, nothing, nothing is more important than keeping our most vulnerable, loved ones safe. On that we all agree.

It must be our priority number 1: Protecting those who cannot protect themselves and who have put their trust in us to protect them. And yet, while those of the other side are patting themselves on the back, talking about how they are making the food more tasty, the statistics on the care, the protection they have failed to give our loved ones in aged care is confronting.

Deputy Speaker, the Department of Health and Aged Care report every week on Covid-19 outbreaks in residential aged care facilities. It’s on their website for all to see. The statistics point to a government that is failing to ‘do better’ as they promised those living in aged care.

In fact, safety is much, much worse. These are the facts Deputy Speaker:

The Liberal/National Coalition was in government from the outbreak of the pandemic until May 2022. During this 29 months, 2,415 lives were lost to COVID-19 in residential aged care.

This was the height of the pandemic.

This was a time when we were developing our response to an unknown virus.

We were transitioning from having no vaccination to developing and then improving vaccinations and treatments.

And we were managing the upheaval the pandemic was having on every other aspect of Australians lives.

During this time, the Coalition was guided by trusted medical professionals who offered calm, expert, and consistent advice.

As we began to emerge from the pandemic in 2022, these same health professionals warned that the pandemic would continue to change and evolve. They warned us in the first quarter of 2022 that we were moving into a critical time in aged care and that the federal government needed to act to prevent a wave of winter deaths from COVID and the flu.

All sides of politics were privy to this advice.

Deputy Speaker, the Albanese government was elected in May 2022.

Now remember I said that 2,415 lives were lost in the 29 months to May last year. The latest weekly report states that in the 15 months under the watch of the Albanese Government, 3,444 lives have been lost to COVID-19 in residential aged care.

3,444 lives in the 15 months under the watch of the Albanese Labor Government.

This is not 'better' Deputy Speaker.

This is much, much worse.

Yet those opposite were handed the strategy to prevent the deaths.

You were left with a range of effective vaccinations and treatments.

You were left with the best medical experts, their experience and advice.

And yet, you have overseen more lives lost to COVID than during the height of the pandemic.

Not a single week has gone by without someone losing their life to COVID in a residential aged care setting. And yet, here you are, standing up and patting yourself on the back.

Shame on you.

I call on you to address this terrible failure and update us on how you will do better.