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GenPro calls foul on Government's funding proposal for primary health care nurses which it says will increase health inequities and fragmentation of an essential workforce

The General Practice Owners Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (GenPro), the national representative body for contracted providers running general practice and urgent care centres across New Zealand, has today called foul on the Government's proposals intended to solve on-going industrial action being taken by the country's primary health care nurses in their pursuit of pay-parity with their DHB employed colleagues.

GenPro's chair, Dr Tim Malloy, said, "The solution being proposed does not offer pay-parity, does not offer anything to hundreds of nurses who are not members of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation or whose employers are not part of the MECA (Multi-employer collective agreement) and does not offer funding beyond June 2021. This would directly increase health inequities and will further fragment and destabilise an essential nursing workforce potentially leaving vulnerable communities without access to local services."

GenPro was raising concerns as details were released of a proposed pay offer to nurses, being backed by the Government, which comes in response to calls for health funding bodies to support primary care nursing professionals at the same rate they have chosen to fund their own DHB employed nurses. GenPro advises that the offer:

- Includes support only for those nurses who are members of the NZNO and whose employers are party to the MECA – thus raising significant inequity between nurses, and between general practices throughout the country – potentially leaving many unable to recruit or retain nurses to serve their local communities.
- Includes only partial funding [for employers] for the period to June 2021 – thereafter leaving general practices to potentially fully subsidise the extra costs from their own pockets.
- Includes only the reduced principle of "pay-relativity" for primary care nurses compared to their DHB colleagues – thus reneging on the previously acknowledged principle of "pay-parity" and insultingly devaluing the contribution of an essential primary care nursing workforce.

Dr Malloy believes the proposals do not address the issues at hand, saying, "These proposals will exacerbate inequities and create a bigger problem for all of New Zealand's general practices. The proposals do not offer equity to primary care nurses or the communities they serve, they do not offer pay-parity, they do not offer anything at all to around half of the country's primary care nurses and, they only offer only a few months funding to their employers."

GenPro believes that a solution is possible which is based on the principles of fairness and inclusiveness. It is making a public offer to work with the Government on behalf of all general practice providers and all primary care nurses, which Dr Malloy hopes is accepted in the spirit in which it is intended, "Conversations are needed which deliver a solution encompassing all primary care nurses, their employers and the communities they serve. This is of significant importance to the sustainability of care for our most vulnerable communities. I am therefore making myself immediately available for those discussions, together with GenPro's Board and Chief Executive."

ENDS

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