

Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

By email: minister.hunt@health.gov.au

Dear Minister Hunt

I am writing on behalf of the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) to raise our concern regarding your support to extend the National Health (Collaborative arrangements for Nurse Practitioners) Determination 2010 for a further two years.

This Collaborative Arrangement limits the care Nurse Practitioners provide to patients and impacts on our most vulnerable people in the community. Nurse Practitioners should not be required to specify a medical practitioner who is/or will be collaborating with them in the patient's care, to enable the patient to receive a Medicare Rebate and have some access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This arrangement impacts on the patients access and equity to quality care in the primary health care system.

Registered nurses (RNs) are regulated health care professionals, who provide holistic patient centred care with other health professionals in team-based models of care. Nurses are accountable and responsible for their own practice and the scope of that practice is guided by legislation and regulation. Nurse practitioners have the capability to provide high levels of clinically focused nursing care in a variety of contexts in Australia. Nursing's regulatory body is the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA), whose role is to protect the public. The role and function of the NMBA provides the framework for nurse practitioners so that they do not need a formal collaborative arrangement as required by this Determination. Furthermore, it is neither appropriate or valid for nurses to provide care "for and on behalf of" any other healthcare professional.

Nursing is a ready solution to address the current pressures on health systems and yet health service policy initiatives over the past decade have consistently relegated nursing to support roles. The expensive, dominant and historical paradigm of health service remains entrenched, even in those service environments where nursing service would be more accessible, more effective and more economical if fully utilised.

In the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife where nurses have been at the forefront of the pandemic and during the crisis in aged care we should be recognising the important role nurses play in our health and aged care systems. This Determination disadvantages patients and increases restrictions on nurses at this time. The Collaborative

Arrangements for Nurse Practitioners are solely related to the right of the patient to claim an MBS rebate, or receive a PBS subsidy, thereby penalising the patient for their choice to see a Nurse Practitioner. The Australian College of Nursing calls on government to remove this traditional Determination for Nurse Practitioners working in primary care.

ACN is the pre-eminent and national leader of the nursing profession. We are committed to our intent of advancing nurse leadership to enhance health care and strongly believe that all nurses, regardless of their job title or level of seniority, are leaders.

If you would like to discuss this issue further please contact my office on 02 6283 3459 or at officeoftheceo@acn.edu.au.

Yours sincerely



Adj Prof Kylie Ward
Chief Executive Officer
RN, MMgt, FACN, FCHSM(Hon),
Wharton Fellow, MAICD



Christopher O'Donnell
ACN Advanced Practice COI Chair,
QLD State Chair, MSc NP.
FACN, MACNP

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