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GenPro disappointed by the comments of the Prime Minister

GenPro was disheartened to hear the comments made to the media by Prime Minister Chris Hipkins regarding nurse pay parity on August 8th. It is clear that parity will not be achieved through increased funding in the immediate future with the Prime Minister stating that this will take time.

The Prime Ministers comments contrasted with the governments reported position of being “committed to bridge the gap”.

He said, “We (the government) don’t employ them (primary care nurses). They’re employed by private practices and there will always be a negotiation between government and private practices to what the appropriate levels of funding are for different services, and of course staff costs is a very big part of that conversation”.

He went on to say “Ultimately, the practices make those decisions. And they may choose to, for example, pay doctors more, but those are questions for them...”

GenPro Chair, Dr Angus Chambers said, “General Practice is losing both doctors and nurses as it cannot compete with salaries both within New Zealand hospitals but also overseas. Patients are unable to enrol, are waiting longer and Emergency departments are clogged due to the crisis in General Practice. These statements are a clear sign of distrust and lack of value that the government places on General Practice”.

Dr Chambers added "General Practice is unable to increase revenue to match hospital nurse pay rates due to our fees being capped by the government. Any funding increases have been absorbed by rising costs, rising demand and increasing complexity of patients. The Prime Minister appears to have been poorly advised around his statement with respect to negotiation. Our negotiating forum has been inactivated and there is no opportunity to negotiate our contract”.

GenPro, alongside other employer representatives, has spent significant time and effort in negotiating a pay disparity reduction deal with NZNO. The affordability of this deal is predicated on the Government increasing funding to General Practice to allow us to achieve a pay settlement that both attracts and retains nurses in Primary Care.

While some inroads have been made, Te Whatu Ora again moved the goal posts with the pay equity settlement for the nurses that they employ, creating an increasing pay gap.

GenPro CEO, Mark Liddle said, "It is hard to reconcile this increasing pay gap, increasing dependence on general practice and the nursing workforce, the rhetoric about retention of health workers from Te Whatu Ora and the position stated by the Prime Minister".

The Prime Minister acknowledged that the cost of healthcare is rising year on year to hold the status quo yet is unwilling to increase the funding to General Practice to meet the pay parity gap.

This again is hard to reconcile with the statement that the 'Labour Party will make adequate allowance for keeping up', as they appear not to have done so to date.

ENDS

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