

Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Health
Minister Responsible for the GCSB
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations
Minister Responsible for Pike River Re-entry



Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques

Dr Tim Malloy
Chair
General Practice Owners Association of Aotearoa New Zealand
By email

22 APR 2022

Tēnā koe Tim

Primary Health Care nursing workforce

This acknowledges your letter of 13 April 2022 regarding the concerns the General Practice Owners Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (GenPro) have about the pay disparity between registered nurses employed within General Practices and Urgent Care Centres in New Zealand and their district health board (DHB) employed counterparts.

Pay parity

It is a foundational principle of this government that workers should be paid fairly for the work that they do, and that lifting incomes of the lowest paid should be the priority. That, of course, includes ensuring our primary health care nursing workforce is paid fairly.

I acknowledge the matters you raise, most notably the need to achieve pay parity for primary care nurses with their district health board employed counterparts. I understand the workforce implications of pay parity for primary health care services.

As you know, the government is committed to reviewing and addressing pay parity to ensure that nursing staff are fairly and equitably paid, regardless of the health setting. You will be aware that work is underway by the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) to develop a framework and processes for this. The work that is needed to enable pay parity to be delivered is complex and will take some time to complete within primary healthcare settings. It is important we take a careful and considered approach, with a focus on achieving a sustainable long-term solution.

Capitation Funding

The primary care funding formula requires work, based off the findings of the Wai 2575 claim that signalled that the primary care funding formula does not adequately distribute funding to address need. As you are aware, Interim Health New Zealand (iHNZ) is completing a review of the specific issues that may require addressing in the capitation formula so that it better reflects both the costs of delivering primary care and addressing need. I am advised this review is due for completion in June 2022. Once completed, an evaluation of the options for how to address the funding of primary care will commence as a key piece of work for both iHNZ and the Interim Māori Health Authority.

I strongly encourage practices to continue to provide low cost (such as VLCA) and zero fees access (such as Under 14-year-olds) to their high needs' populations. According to the latest Health Survey Results 2020/21, about one in ten adults reported not seeing a general practitioner (GP) due to cost in the 12 months prior to the 2020/21 survey. Among children, fewer than 1 in 100 did not see a GP due to cost in 2020/21. This comparison between adult and child utilisation of general practice services demonstrates the positive impact when the cost barrier is removed.

Population health services

I also acknowledge the important role the general practice team has in providing population-based care. The Ministry of Health is working with the sector to plan for COVID-19 recovery. This includes planning for winter illness (especially with borders reopening) and addressing any backlog in routine or preventative care that may have been put on hold due to COVID-19.

The government remains committed to the long-term sustainable provision of primary health care services, ensuring that these address the population needs of Aotearoa New Zealand.

It is my hope that GenPro will play a constructive role in the important work being undertaken on strengthening primary care services and nursing going forward, which includes lifting up the incomes of the lowest paid.

Thank you again for writing.

Nāku noa, nā

Hon Andrew Little
Minister of Health

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Andrew Little', is written over the typed name and title.