

Media Release: Embargoed until 6am on Thursday, 27 October 2022

Government's injection of health funding is supporting management restructures but is failing to reach essential front-line patient services which are in crisis

Today's planned walk-out of essential general practice nurses is the direct result of the continued underfunding of general practice by successive governments and the repeated failure to provide funding to address the significant pay disparities between general practice nurses and their comparable hospital-based counterparts.

That's the view of GenPro, the General Practice Owners Association, which represents around 400 of the general practices and urgent care centres whose services may be affected by today's strike.



GenPro's Chair, Dr Tim Malloy (pictured) believes that the underfunding of general practice services and the undervaluing of the general practice workforce is a significant reason behind the well documented pressures being faced by hospital emergency departments across the country. "A direct impact of the government's real-terms funding cut imposed upon general practice and essential family doctor services in July 2022, is that many front-line services are now operating with reduced staffing and with reduced hours. That is bound to have a wider impact on patient care and Emergency Departments and we have previously warned the government that this would happen".

A nurse working in general practice may be earning in excess of 10% less than an equivalent nurse working in a hospital setting. "That is

insulting to our essential front-line nurses. Despite the continued rhetoric from this government about the importance of fair pay, it is itself responsible for a significant and unjustified pay disparity at a time when it is passing its own new fair pay legislation. It's impossible not to see the irony in that", said Dr Malloy

Previous strike action, on this very same issue, in August and September 2020 resulted in a temporary and only-partial funding fix which GenPro believes failed to provide a permanent solution for employers or the nurses themselves. In the meantime, GenPro is extremely concerned that the government is prioritising hundreds of millions of dollars for the restructure of tiers of health managers whilst front-line services in general practice are underfunded and in crisis.

GenPro has directly written to the Minister and provided costed options for a solution to the pay parity claim behind today's nursing strike. Previous correspondence to GenPro from the Minister has acknowledged that securing pay parity is a priority for the government but Dr Malloy echoes the concerns of GenPro's members, stating, "We still have no funded solution despite hundreds of millions of dollars being invested in management reform in the meantime. That is incredibly insulting to our essential front-line nurses and the impact will continue to be felt by patients and across the wider health system until a solution is reached".

ENDS

Further information can be obtained from:

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Notes to Editors:

Real-terms funding cut: In July 2022, the government imposed a funding increase of just 3% on already underfunded front-line general practice services at a time when CPI inflation was running at 7.3% and a raft of additional cost pressures were being faced by the sector. This was done without any negotiation or consultation. Read GenPro's 1 June 2022 statement here: <https://genpro.org.nz/docs/Media-Release-1-June-2022.pdf>

Impact of Pay Disparities: in April 2022, GenPro wrote to the Minister of Health to directly raise concerns about the lack of pay parity for nurses. Read GenPro's letter here: <https://genpro.org.nz/docs/ministerdhburses13-apr-2022.pdf> and read the reply from the Minister of Health here: <https://genpro.org.nz/docs/ministerreply22-apr-2022.pdf>

Costed Solution: GenPro wrote again to the Minister of Health on 17 October 2022 to provide costed options to address the pay disparities for general practice nurses. Whilst further discussions are awaited with the Minister, and as a courtesy to that process, details of the correspondence and costed submission are not being made public at this stage.