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The Government is blocking pay-parity for primary health care nurses.

The on-going failure to resolve primary health care nurses and administrators claims for pay parity is impacting upon patient care, it is damaging for all primary care staff and it is undermining the sustainability of essential general practice businesses. Yet, according to GenPro, the General Practice Owners Association, the dispute could be settled overnight by general practice employers – but the Government is blocking them from doing so.



The Chair of GenPro, Dr Tim Malloy (pictured), says that the Government controls the two main sources of income for general practices – the Government's capitation subsidy and the level of patient fees (or co-payments) which practices are allowed to charge. Therefore, "With the Government continuing to refuse to appropriately increase capitation funding, the only alternative is for general practices to increase their patient fees to support pay parity for their staff – but the Government isn't allowing us to do that either."

GenPro's comments come after the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) confirm they are arranging to ballot members on further strike action having previously held an eight-hour strike on 3 September 2020. NZNO's decision follows a meeting between the NZNO and employer representatives* as well as a separate meeting of those parties with the

Ministry of Health and DHBs where, GenPro understands, a funding option was being proposed by DHBs on behalf of the Government but that there was insufficient progress or agreement to prevent further action being deemed necessary by the employee representatives, the NZNO.

As a newly established representative Association, GenPro has not been directly involved in the MECA (multi-employer collective agreement) contractual negotiations to date, however Dr Malloy goes on to say, "GenPro has no control over this dispute but we share our members' concerns that it has become time critical - the last MECA expired over a year ago on 31 August 2019. We are ready to recommend either of the two potential solutions to our members in order that essential primary health care workers can receive the pay parity they rightly deserve.

GenPro believes that funding to achieve pay-parity for primary care nurses should be made available through DHBs (the Government's agents for funding primary care) as it was their previous collective agreement to increase pay for hospital based nurses which has created the situation whereby a well-qualified and experienced nurse is expected by the Government to work in primary care for typically 10% less pay than their DHB (hospital) counterparts, "That is a gross unfairness which we cannot and should not support." says Dr Malloy.

ENDS

Further information can be obtained from:

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*** The employer representatives at the MECA negotiations are currently:**

- The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) and,
- Green Cross Health

The two potential solutions referred to by GenPro to ensure pay-parity for primary health care staff are:

- For the Government (through DHBs) to increase the capitation funding paid to general practice providers for the provision of care to their enrolled patients
- For the Government to allow general practice providers to increase patient co-payments (practices only other main source of income) to cover the additional staff costs