



Media Alert

Monday, July 27, 2009

Primary health care reforms will improve access, but opportunities for aged care missed again.

In response to the release of recommendations from the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission the Australian Nursing Federation welcomed the focus on primary health care and the development of Comprehensive Primary Health Care Centers.

“Community access to good quality primary health care is pivotal to easing pressure on the public hospital system. The widespread establishment of these centers and services, run by teams of health professionals is a positive initiative;” ANF Federal Secretary Ged Kearney said today.

The commission recognised the skills of all health professionals in the care team, including the important contribution of nurses and midwives in the changing face of clinical and community practice.

“The focus on primary health care from a range of health professionals means people and their community will have access to health care delivered by the right professional at the right time.” Ms Kearney said.

The ANF also welcomed recommendations to: extend Medicare rebates to relevant diagnostic services and specialist medical services ordered or referred by nurse practitioners and other health professionals, and for the establishment of person controlled e-health records and better links between health services.

However the ANF is concerned about the proposed introduction of Medicare Select saying that there was a lack of information about the recommendation which seemed to apportion a defined amount of money per person.

“We will be looking for more information on this recommendation and all other funding models. We are particularly concerned about funding option one, which seems to be the governments preferred option;” Ms Kearney said. “Option one does not fix cost shifting it will only serve to further fragment care, exacerbating cost shifting and continuing the government blame game.”

Of concern to the ANF and nurses were the aged care recommendations to introduce accommodation bonds in high care.

“Aged care is in desperate need for good reform, the population is ageing, people’s care needs are increasing and nurses and assistants in nursing are under intense pressure. But putting the burden of funding on older Australians, perhaps forcing them out of their homes, because they are in need of high level care is not an answer.”

“The commission had the opportunity to bring positive reforms to aged care, instead they have ignored the critical issues of workforce and transparency and accountability of taxpayers funding.”

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