



AMA
TASMANIA

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GENERAL PRACTICE NURSE JOBS AT RISK IN TASMANIA

The decision by the Rudd Government to alter the format of funding of nurses currently employed in General Practices will have the perverse effect of increasing the strain on Tasmanian General Practitioners.

The Rudd Government intends to withdraw all the Medicare items for services provided by a practice nurse in December 2011 and for Tasmanian General Practices replace the items with block grants of \$30,000 for a fully registered nurse or \$15,000 for an enrolled nurse for each full time General Practitioner. Practices with more than 5 doctors will be capped at \$150,000. This will make the employment of Practice Nurses not financially viable. It will significantly increase the workload of our already hard pressed Tasmanian General Practitioners.

"Tasmanian General Practices are particularly disadvantaged by the recently announced changes to Practice Nurse funding as all Tasmanian General Practices, urban or rural, are classed by Medicare as rural practices due to some undertakings given by the Howard Government. For some years rural and Tasmanian General Practices have been eligible for grants to assist in the employment of Practice Nurses as well as a higher Medicare payment if they bulk bill the service the nurse provides.

This arrangement has allowed Tasmanian General Practices to employ many more nurses than their mainland counterparts which has helped ease the doctor shortage crisis in Tasmania. The

recently announced changes may well assist urban Practices on the mainland but will significantly disadvantage General Practices in Tasmania."

AMA President Dr Michael Aizen believes the Rudd Government decision has the potential to create the most serious crisis to face General Practice in Tasmania for many years. The hard work of involving nurses in General Practice will be undone overnight.

Dr Aizen calls on Minister Roxon to implement immediate remedial action to ensure that General Practices employing nurses under current provisions, and their patients, are not disadvantaged.

Further comment:

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END