

19th February 2009

Chiropractors welcome reform push – but an end to the gatekeeper approach to primary health is needed

The Chiropractors' Association of Australia (National) [CAA] welcomes the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission's (NHHRC) interim report – *A Healthier Future for all Australians* – as a step in the right direction in the health reform agenda. However the Association believes it fails to address workforce and access issues by not giving a more substantive role to registered allied health professionals in primary care across the nation.

The CAA welcomes the expansion of Medicare beyond medical care to support greater public access to a wider range of health professionals in primary health care, using funding approaches that are better suited to care over an extended time.

However, the CAA does not accept the limiting of Medicare coverage for services provided by highly qualified, registered allied health professionals solely in rural and remote areas. According to the CAA, this limited approach - while welcomed - does not represent major health reform as doctor shortages extend beyond regional Australia to the suburbs of the capital cities.

The Association welcomes the recommendation for comprehensive primary care centres or one-stop superclinics, and the investment in electronic health records, since currently multiple carers treat chronic conditions without all patient data in front of them.

It is government policy to reject the gatekeeper approach to primary care, since addressing the causes and impact of health inequities requires the removal of the gatekeeper approach. Nurse practitioners and registered allied health practitioners are a vital part of the primary health care system and in Comprehensive Primary Health Care Centres.

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