



NEW SOUTH WALES NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIAN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY FEDERATION NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH



POLICY ON PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTH SERVICES

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NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association
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Policy on Public and Private Health Services

THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION RECOGNISES THAT:

- The private sector has a role as an alternative choice for the provision of Health as a public good with shared benefits and shared responsibilities.
- Access to health care is a fundamental human right for every person, not a privilege.
- Health care includes health promotion, health education, health maintenance and illness prevention, illness care, rehabilitation and palliative care and is delivered in a variety of settings by public, private, non-government, not for profit and voluntary providers.
- Public health, *the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society*¹, is also a crucial approach by which health and well-being is supported.
- Publicly funded universal health insurance is an efficient and effective mechanism to distribute resources in a manner that generally ensures timely and equitable access to affordable health care on the basis of clinical need rather than capacity to pay.
- In a mixed public/private system, a strong, publicly funded health system plays an important role in containing the overall rate of inflation of health costs.
- The private sector has a role as an alternative choice for the provision of health care; however, its expansion must not be at the expense of publicly provided services available to all.
- If all Australians rely on the same health system, then all Australians have an interest in ensuring that system is properly funded and of high quality. We reject the argument that Medicare should be reduced to a safety-net for the poor. This would inevitably lead to a two-tier system, with substandard services for the poor, escalating demand and cost for private care and the establishment of a permanent lobby for underfunding public care.

THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION ADOPTS THE POLICY THAT:

1. Financial barriers should not be imposed on access to health care.
2. All health services should incorporate the principles and philosophy of primary health care, i.e. social justice, equity and self-determination, patient-centred, delivered by the most appropriate health professional, with a focus on early intervention to promote health and prevent illness.



3. All health services should be developed in consultation with health care providers and the community so that the care provided is culturally and physically safe and responsive to identified health needs.
4. Health care providers should collaborate to ensure that health services within a community are integrated to provide a continuum of care.
5. The provision of all health services, including allocation of resources, should be subject to Government regulation and planned in the context of the total needs and requirements of the geographical area in which the service is proposed.
6. Individuals requiring health care should have a right to a choice as to choose how and where that health care is provided, as far as practicable.
7. The provision of private health services should remain, complementary to a viable and effective public health system.
8. The private sector should be an optional and unsubsidised adjunct to a well-resourced public system for all.
9. Remuneration, conditions of employment and other entitlements of nurses and midwives employed in the private sector must be equitable with those employed in the public health system.

REFERENCE:

1. Acheson, 1988; World Health Organisation