



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

Tony Abbott MHR

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More Government support for nurses working in general practice

The Commonwealth Government has decided to subsidise the employment of practice nurses in all urban areas of workforce shortage.

More than 650 additional general practices in areas of workforce shortage will now be eligible for a Government subsidy to employ nurses. The Government offers a practice nurse incentive payment of about \$8,000 per fulltime GP.

"Getting more skilled nurses working in general practice is an important way of making better use of the existing health workforce," Tony Abbott said.

So far, the Government's practice nurse initiatives have helped more than 1,700 general practices to employ practice nurses. Of these, 615 are in urban areas with each practice receiving an average annual government incentive payment of \$26,000.

"The Government's offer of extra help to overstretched general practices will help patients in urban areas where there are doctor shortages. The work of nurses helps to free up doctors, allowing the general practice to see more patients on a daily basis," Tony Abbott said.

Any general practice in a rural area is eligible for a government incentive to employ a practice nurse and as a result of this new expansion, any general practice in an urban area with a workforce shortage will also be eligible for a government subsidy. This expansion will be funded as part of the \$80 million *Strengthening Medicare* practice nurse initiative.

Some of the areas to benefit from this expansion include north and south west metropolitan Perth, outer areas of northern Brisbane, north eastern Melbourne, Southern Adelaide, Kingborough in Tasmania and the Northern Beaches of NSW.

General practice nurses currently provide wound management, immunisations and Pap smears in rural areas. The Government is currently considering expanding the range of services that nurses can provide under Medicare.

"The Government would like to see skilled nurses in general practice providing a greater range of services as part of the COAG process," Tony Abbott said.

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