

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

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**Safety first in review of collaborative agreements, says AMA**

The AMA says patient safety must be paramount in a Department of Health review of collaborative arrangements between doctors, nurse practitioners and midwives.

In a submission to the review, the AMA has called for retention of the existing rules that require nurse practitioners and midwives to have collaborative arrangements in place with a medical practitioner before they can provide services funded under Medicare or prescribe medications through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said collaborative arrangements are critical to patient safety and reflect a modern team-based approach to health care, with nurse practitioners and midwives working within clearly defined structures that help safeguard against fragmentation of care and to limit the possibility of missed or misdiagnosis.

“Any move to water down the existing rules will not improve access to care for patients and would increase the risks of missed or wrong diagnosis, fragment care and lead to greater duplication of diagnostic and other services,” Professor Robson said.

Professor Robson said Australia was experiencing an acute workforce shortage, which was impacting all parts of the health system.

“The AMA supports models which improve access to care by supporting health professionals to work together in a co-ordinated way to ensure patients get the best possible outcomes.

“However, improved access must never come at the cost of patient safety and collaborative arrangements provide the necessary checks and balances and support from highly trained medical practitioners.

“Workforce shortages will not be solved by watering down rules designed to promote patient safety. Solutions require proper planning and genuine investment from the Government.”

Professor Robson said nurses and midwives play a valuable role in the health care team, bringing their own unique skills to the care of patients, and policy settings which encourage them to work with medical professionals in the care of patients reflect current best practice.

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