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## **Government remains on fence over funding primary care nurse claim**



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2 minutes to Read



Health minister Shane Reti reiterates that the Government is not the employer of most nurses in the primary and community sector [Image: Hagen Hopkins]

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“Funding implications...will be considered once the employers and the unions complete their work to identify the level of sex-based undervaluation”

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The Government remains firmly on the fence over funding the primary care nursing pay equity claim in the wake of a union challenge to honour a “pre-election promise”.

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation last week in a media release **criticised the Coalition Government for refusing to commit to adequately funding primary and community care when the sector’s current nurse pay equity claims** are eventually settled. It called on prime minister Christopher Luxon to honour his pre-election leaders’ debate commitment, for nurses to be paid the same wherever they work, by boosting the three-year Vote Health Budget to cover the future settlement of the primary and community nurse pay equity claims.

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- › **NEWS: NZNO responds to fears over pay equity at general practice webinar**

**PM passes off to minister**

*New Zealand Doctor Rata Aotearoa* last week asked the prime minister's office for a response to the NZNO's criticism and for the Government's position on funding pay equity claims for publicly funded health services like general practices.

Mr Luxon's office forwarded the request to health minister Shane Reti's office who yesterday sent an email response saying, "fair pay for nurses is important no matter where they work".

"However, the Government is not the employer of most nurses in the primary and community sector."

Dr Reti repeated this point by stating: "private sector employers of funded sector workforces like primary care and community-based nurses" set employee pay rates, subject to good-faith bargaining.

He has now received "general information" about the primary and community pay equity claims which he understands "are still in their infancy".

"Funding implications for government will be considered once the employers and the unions complete their work to identify the level of sex-based undervaluation across these workforces."

## **Pay parity preferred path**

An initial pay equity claim was lodged late last year by NZNO on behalf of its nurse and administration members at general practices and urgent-care centres **and is soon to be extended to cover virtually all 1000 primary care worksites.**

Both employers and the union have stated they would prefer the Government commit to funding pay parity, to close the pay gap with Te Whatu Ora staff created by the Government-funded pay equity settlements, rather than having to repeat the pay equity process to prove again that the female-dominated workforces have been historically undervalued and underpaid.

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