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## **Workforce woes could prevent practices making the most of new funding**



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Practice Managers & Administrators Association of New Zealand chair Michelle Te Kira says new money needs to go to front-line teams and not advisory boards and reviews

## News and reaction to Budget 2022

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General practice managers are glad there's a funding boost in Budget 2022 for primary care but say they're still plagued by workforce issues.

The Government is injecting \$488 million over two years into primary and community care operational funding to strengthen the role of these sectors.

It includes \$102 million over three years to establish integrated primary care teams within locality provider networks. The new teams will combine GPs and registered nurses with other providers, including physiotherapists, practice-based pharmacists, care coordinators and social workers.

The funding will be time limited as it's intended for establishment costs. A total of \$86 million over four years will go to more equitably allocate primary care funding to general practices based on their enrolled high-needs populations. And \$76 million is for training and primary care specialists.

### **More detail needed**

Practice Managers & Administrators Association of New Zealand chair and Three Waters Medical general manager, Michelle Te Kira, says it's great to hear the Government is investing in primary care but wants more detail.

In a statement, health minister Andrew Little says: "A shift to focusing on better, earlier care at GPs and local health centres will ensure New Zealand's health system can provide quality care, at the right time, and in the right place, while taking pressure off our hospitals."

"That's all well and good but we won't have these community health services or general practices if the workforce issues aren't sorted," says Ms Te Kira.

## **Rural workforce problem**

It's hard to attract people to work in rural areas, she says. Allowing doctors to do placements in general practices, rather than just hospitals would help. Ms Te Kira says one of her receptionists is an overseas doctor, who would benefit from that.

“Funding needs to go to front-line teams and shouldn't be used for advisory boards and review after review,” says Ms Te Kira. She understands the new health system needs to be set up, “But what about business-as-usual?”

Ms Te Kira says there's a proposal to increase capitation funding by \$2.38 per person. She says that's very low when inflation is running at 6.9 per cent. Infrastructure and IT costs have also skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms Te Kira says the sector is historically underfunded. Many of her nurses are going to Australia. “We all want the health reforms to succeed,” she says, “but workforce issues are horrendous.”

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