ANMF (Vic Branch) Policy

Privatisation of public health services within the health industry

It is the policy of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) that:

1. All citizens/people have access to high quality health services. The provision of all public and private health services should be subject to Government regulation and accountability in the context of the total needs and requirements of the population, thereby affording optimum community accessibility.

2. The provision of private health services is complementary to the continuation and maintenance of a Victorian public health system that is fully functional and offers a broad range of services consistent with the needs of the community it exists to serve. The current system of public/private hospitals provides high quality, multi-choice accessibility to health care by the community. The privatisation of public health facilities does not enhance this situation.

3. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) is opposed to the privatisation of Victorian Public Health Services for the following reasons:

   3.1 The privatisation of public health services to either privately owned and operated or publicly owned, but privately operated facilities is an abrogation of Government’s responsibility and can lead to loss of universal access, with increased costs to health consumers.

   3.2 Private for profit health providers have a fiduciary duty to shareholders to maximise profit, rather than enhance health and medical services. A number of services provided within the public health sector are based on the needs of the community - not on the potential profit making ability of the service. Privately run public health removes the guarantee that the public’s particular interests will be protected by Government in regard to diversity, cost, quality, access, equity and community responsibility.

   3.3 Australia is recognised internationally as providing cost-effective quality health care. Although Australia spends approximately half as much as the United States of America on our public health system in relation to GDP, Australia is able to provide a high quality service with equality of access for all. In the Victorian experience, private operators have not been able to offer services at reduced cost to Government while making a return to shareholders.

4. The provision of private sector health services by private employers in public facilities, or the provision by the private sector of services formerly delivered by the public sector should not be initiated or operated in a way that disturbs the application of appropriate industrial agreements and Awards or prevailing public sector conditions.