

HEALTH POLICY

ACTU CONGRESS 2000

1. Medicare

1.1 On the basis of the views of union members reflected in the survey undertaken by the ACTU regarding Medicare the ACTU and its affiliated unions will:

- i) Oppose funding cuts to public hospitals and other public health services.
- ii) Lobby for increased funding to public hospitals and other public health services.
- iii) Lobby all political parties for continued support and expansion of Medicare and ensure that universality of the scheme is maintained and funded via the taxation system.
- iv) Participate in community debate and activities in support of Medicare.
- v) Lobby to ensure that bulk billing for General Practitioner services is maintained and is available to all in our community.
- vi) Oppose the imposition of fees and / or charges for publicly funded health services at the point of service delivery.
- vii) Lobby for equitable funding for the public sector, given the Federal Government's unprecedented level of support to the private health sector.
- viii) Lobby for the continuation of universal access to health care with private health insurance as an optional add-on.
- ix) Lobby for private health insurance to provide value for money within a stronger universal public system, and apply wage justice to their own employees.
- x) Lobby for the continuation of health services as a Government funded community responsibility and oppose user pays, co-payments, diversion of superannuation or other means of shifting the responsibility of health funding.

2. Health Workforce

2.2 Unions will seek to ensure equitable wages and working conditions for workers in the health sector by:

- i) Lobbying for adequate funding of public hospitals by both Federal and State Governments.
- ii) Opposing the further privatisation or contracting out of public health services.
- iii) Campaign for adequate numbers of permanent employees are employed to enable quality health care without excessive stress on employees.
- iv) Pursuing parity in pay and working conditions for health workers in the public and private sector.
- v) Taking all possible steps industrially and through the Industrial Relations Commission to achieve proper rostering of staff with full entitlements to breaks etc.
- vi) Taking all possible steps industrially and through the Industrial Relations Commission to ensure that the hours required to be worked by staff are reasonable.
- vii) Taking all possible steps industrially and through the Industrial Relations Commission to ensure casual workers have commensurate wages and working conditions with permanent workers.
- viii) Continuing union involvement in education and training of workers in the health sector.
- ix) Taking all possible action to improve workplace health and safety standards for all health workers.

3. Aged Care

3.1 The ACTU and health unions will work in partnership with other stakeholders in the aged care sector to:

- i) Promote a proper complaints mechanism, both internal and external, linked to the accreditation system.
- ii) Promote the highest standard benchmark for quality care.
- iii) Promote and lobby for the linking of funding and staffing levels and skill mixes to the health care needs of residents and clients.

- iv) Lobby for increased funding of the sector.
- v) Lobby for increased transparency and accountability in the use of public funds in the sector.
- vi) Press for implementation of higher occupational health and safety standards in aged care facilities.
- vii) Take all possible steps industrially and through the Industrial Relations Commission to ensure that workers in this sector receive equivalent wages and conditions as workers in the general health sector.

4. A Prospective Labor Government

4.1 The ACTU recognises the historic role of Labor in government of establishing and defending the universal health care system. The ACTU calls on Federal Labor, if elected, to defend universal health care by:

- i) abolishing the 30% private health insurance rebate;
- ii) redirecting the funds saved by abolishing the rebate into the public health system;
- iii) restoring community rating in private health insurance; and
- iv) abolishing the Medicare surcharge and other disincentives to taxpayers relying solely on Medicare.