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**EXTEND CASH INCENTIVES TO NURSES WHO WANT TO WORK IN
GENERAL PRACTICE: AMA**

The AMA wants the government cash incentive scheme designed to lure nurses back into the workforce to be extended to include nurses who want to work in general practice.

It was reported this week (*The Australian*, 27 August 2009) that the Federal Government's program to bring nurses back into the workforce was failing to meet targets, with only 541 nurses recruited.

AMA President, Dr Andrew Pesce, said nearly \$40 million over five years in funding had been set aside for the *Bringing Nurses Back Into The Workforce* program and it was vital that the money was used effectively.

"The Government's initiative is too restrictive because it only targets public hospitals, private hospitals and aged care facilities," Dr Pesce said.

"The *Bringing Nurses Back Into The Workforce* program ignores the important contribution that nurses can make in other parts of the health sector such as general practice.

"The program's guidelines should be relaxed so that nurses who want to return to the workforce to take up a position in general practice will be eligible for funding."

Around 60 per cent of general practices employ practice nurses who work collaboratively with doctors.

"General practice can offer nurses a very rewarding career and a great work/life balance," Dr Pesce said.

"Getting more nurses into general practice supports multidisciplinary care and will free up GPs to see more patients."

The AMA also believes general practices should be better supported to employ practice nurses by making practice nurse grants available to all general practices and ensuring that the Medicare Benefits Schedule recognises the full scope of patient care that GP practice nurses can provide.

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