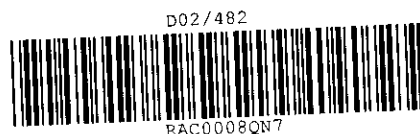




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The General Manager
Adjudication Branch
Australian Competition & Consumer Commission
P O Box 19
DICKSON ACT 2602

2nd January 2002

Dear Mr Grimwade,

**Re: Application for Authorisation Nos A90811 & A90812 lodged by
Health Purchasing Victoria**

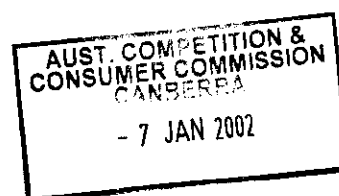
Alpha Nursing Aust. Pty. Ltd. opposes the granting of the above proposal on the grounds that the Trade Practices Act was introduced to protect individuals, public and/or businesses from monopolies or greed from larger and/or wealthier companies.

ALPHA believes that the proposal by Health Purchasing Victoria ('HPV') is a restriction of trade to nurses and allied health workers.

It is interesting to note that HPV have not approached nursing agencies for comments or opinions on how to address, or to negotiate pricing etc.

It also appears that HPV have endeavoured to strengthen their argument by quoting *extreme* examples of fees for agency nurses that do not apply to all agencies.

ALPHA has endeavoured to discuss rates with various facilities and have noted that allocations personnel in most instances have no knowledge of agency fees and therefore book staffing with whom ever can fill their staffing deficits first, without consideration of the cost of doing so.



Further, Finance Departments of Public Hospitals appear not to have implemented systems that require allocation staff to acquire their agency staff from those agencies that are more cost effective.

If the ACCC is to authorise HPV to contravene the Trade Practices Act ('TPA') 1974 it will create in my opinion one 'Super Agency' (a monopoly) and this is the very reason why the TPA was introduced.

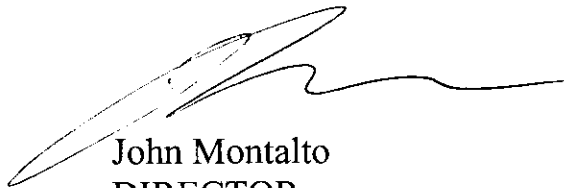
The Public Benefit of price certainty to Health Services can still be achieved.

Price Set could be achieved without the ACCC intervention. It could only be a matter of discussing/ negotiating issues with Nursing Agencies as a body for consideration and evaluation.

May we also ask on behalf of the many nurses who choose to work with an agency for varied reasons and also as a personal preference, do Agency Nurses have rights? Should the ACCC consider this?

Whilst ALPHA appreciates the dilemma of spiralling costs introduced by some nursing agencies to Public Health Care Facilities we still do not agree with interim authorisation being granted to HPV by the ACCC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Montalto', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

John Montalto
DIRECTOR
Alpha Nursing Aust. Pty. Ltd.