

Parsons, Rani

From: Alex Nicholls <surgeon@dralexnicholls.com.au>
Sent: Friday, 28 May 2021 10:55 AM
To: Exemptions
Cc: Stephen Milgate
Subject: Honeysuckle Health Buying Group

Follow Up Flag: FWD to MP. RP 28/5
Flag Status: Flagged

Categories: Submission

RE: Honeysuckle Health Buying Group Authorisation number: AA1000542

I am writing to voice my opposition to the formation of the Honeysuckle Health Buying group.

I have read the ACCC draft determination which outlines the proposal between Honeysuckle Health and NIB to form a “buying group”. I also read with interest the involvement of the US based company Cigna Health, currently fighting legal battles in the US for refusing care to patients.

I have lived and worked as a surgeon both in the USA and United Kingdom and I can categorically tell you that our current system of healthcare is the best model in the world. Our patients receive world class care whether they be public or private. I presently work in both the public and private sectors in NSW. Much of my work is with paediatric orthopaedic patients, which include some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Importantly all our patients in Australia have choice. They can choose their doctor, their hospital and their treatment. Doctors have freedom to select treatment. This applies to all patients in all states. The critical part is that doctors (with legal responsibility and duty of care) **make determinations on patient management and not accountant/administrators (with no legal responsibility).**

On the other hand, US-style managed care run by corporations does not result in better patient care or cost savings to patients. Corporations do not have any legal duty of care to patients.

US style managed care will not “fix” any shortcomings of our Australian healthcare system. **To the contrary, it is my belief that international corporations and locally listed corporations see our healthcare ecosystem only as a revenue tool for their shareholders. Allowing these corporations into a more**

vertically integrated presence in our healthcare system should be resisted. The extent of corporate greed should not be underestimated in this moment.

Patients are likely to have less autonomy and less choice. Treatment is likely to be channeled towards cheaper inferior levels of care. Medical professionals will become marginalised and standards of care (and clinical responsibility) will fall. Corporations will take no responsibility for patient care. The Cigna Health legal cases in the US courts reinforce this.

In summary, the public will suffer. Healthcare standards will fall and there will be no cost savings passed onto the patients. I am concerned that my patients will be worse off under a managed care system. Public detriment will outweigh the public benefit.

I am in full support of the Australian Society of Orthopaedic Surgeons (ASOS) position statement. ASOS opposes the formation of the Honeysuckle Health Buying Group.

Dr Alex Nicholls
BMedSc(Hons) MBBS MSc(*Oxon*) FRACS
Orthopaedic Surgeon
Adult & Paediatric Knees

T: 02 8045 5640
F: 02 8080 8223
reception@dralexnicholls.com.au

This email and any attachments to it (the "Email") is confidential and is for the use only of the intended recipient, and may not be duplicated or used by any other party without the express consent of the sender. If you are not the intended recipient of the Email, please notify the sender immediately by return email, delete the Email, and do not copy, print, retransmit, store or act in reliance on the Email.