

Hi, I am Dr Philip Morris.

I am president of the National Association of Practising Psychiatrists.

Australia is facing the imposition of United States style managed health care.

This is not good for doctors, and it is definitely not good for patients.

US-style managed care threatens the independence of doctors; the independence to make clinical decisions in the best interests of their patients.

US-style managed care threatens the value of private health insurance by making it harder for patients:

To chose their doctor,

To chose their hospital,

To access the most effective treatments and prostheses, and

To have the most convenient and timely health care.

This loss of value of private insurance will force more patients onto the public health care system.

US-style managed care has no place in the Australian health care system.

We will spare no effort in fighting against managed care getting a foothold in Australia.

We hope you will join us.

Dr Philip Morris AM
President NAPP
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**National Association of Practising Psychiatrists:
Submission to the ACCC regarding the Honeysuckle Application Draft Decision**

The Honeysuckle Health proposal put to the ACCC is a prescription for an enormous US health service company (Cigna) to join with an Australian health insurer (nib) to create a massive buying group to purchase health services from the private sector.

Cigna is a huge private US managed care company with a multi-billion-dollar turnover and 70,000 employees with an obligation to make profits for its shareholders. It dwarfs any Australian health insurer.

A buying group of this size will distort the market and make it difficult for private hospitals and professional service providers to continue to operate as independent entities with their own service characteristics given the need to comply with demands for managed care from this buying group that will have little competition.

US-style managed care puts an unnecessary entity between the patient and doctor. Managed care companies interfere with medical decisions in order to reduce costs often irrespective of the needs of patients. US-style managed care requires the private hospital and associated medical practitioners to have contracts with the company or an intermediary. The medical practitioner can no longer act independently in the best interests of patients because the managed care company controls the decision-making of the practitioner. In time, only doctors who have contracts with managed care companies will be able to see insured patients.

Ultimately, this diminishes patient choice of doctor and affects the quality of care provided, including admission and discharge practices, and what treatments are available both within and outside the hospital. If this proposal goes through it will affect private psychiatric practice in Australia, at first inpatient care given through the private psychiatric hospital sector. Next will be outpatient services provided by private hospitals and medical groups.

The National Association of Practising Psychiatrists (NAPP) stands up for the independence of its members and other psychiatrists and health care providers to make clinical decisions for patients based on the needs of the patient and the best practice guidelines available, not based on the financial constraints of managed care companies. This is a quality of care and human rights issue for our patients.

NAPP disagrees with the ACCC draft determination about the proposal made recently. NAPP has taken advice from interested parties, and especially psychiatric fellows practising in the private sector, and asks the ACCC to reverse its draft decision on the Honeysuckle application and reject the application in its entirety.

Dr Philip Morris AM
President NAPP

Dr Vivienne Elton
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Dr Melinda Hill
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