



PRESS RELEASE issued by the New Zealand Rural General Practice Network for immediate use, July 31, 2015

## More health dollars for training Nurse Practitioners ground breaking – NZRGPN chair

The announcement by Health Minister Jonathan Coleman that an additional 20 training places would be allocated to Nurse Practitioners next year has been hailed as “ground breaking” by Network chair and Nurse Practitioner Sharon Hansen.

Minister Coleman announced yesterday (July 30) that the Government is committing \$846,000 to support an additional 20 Nurse Practitioner trainees in 2016.

“It’s very exciting that the Minister has seen the need and is putting money into placing more nurses on the Nurse Practitioner pathway,” said Ms Hansen, a Temuka-based NP.

While hailing the initiative she says there are some challenges too.

“One of them will be to ensure that there is an even distribution throughout the country for these NPs in terms of their training and work placement post registration.

“We also need to ensure that the proposed support is put into the work environment. We have always struggled with mentorship both in training and in the first year after NP registration has been completed. One of the things that NPs need is good collegial and peer support and good structures around them, and that’s ongoing.

“The devil will be in the detail about how that is going to pan out and the Network has a pivotal role to play here. We are in a great position to assist in this area. We have a membership that has the ability to support these nurses during and after their training.”

Ms Hansen says she is often questioned about ‘where and how do we get a Nurse Practitioner, we want one’. “So we need to have the connectivity between training, trainees and primary care practices in rural to make this happen”.

Employment of NPs in rural practices is another area of concern, she says. “We need to think about how that happens and support practices in doing their sums to make it happen. Nurse Practitioners will bring in their own funding sources through things such as co-payments and through existing payment schemes. We are not looking at new money, but we are looking at helping practices grow their business models.

“Nurse Practitioners will play a valuable role in the new and evolving model of primary health care in rural centred on the needs of patients and their whanau and we have to think about that in a sustainable way,” says Ms Hansen.

### Additional notes:

The University of Auckland and Massey University have designed a new education programme for the 20 new Nurse Practitioner trainees. It will offer more supervised practice time and require employer support to ensure graduates can practise in their advanced roles as soon as they qualify and register as nurse practitioners.

As at 31 March 2015, 145 nurse practitioners were registered by the Nursing Council of New Zealand.

Nurse Practitioners are experienced nurses with a clinical Master's degree. They work in a range of settings from hospitals and aged care facilities to general practices.

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