



**The Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently  
Incapacitated Ex Servicemen and Women Ltd  
(Incorporated in the ACT)**

**DIFFERENT CONFLICT- SAME SACRIFICE  
Patron-in-Chief**

**His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery, AC, CVO, MC (Rtd)  
Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia**

16 April 2008

The Hon Alan Griffin  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

The following is a proposal from the TPI Federation for your consideration concerning the use of GP Practice Nurses for home visits.

#### Background

The complexities of treating aged veterans are well known as they tend to have a range of chronic conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder. Many veterans, and war widows, are reluctant to travel and we have a situation in Australia where 80% of female and 70% of male GPs, who for various reasons, choose not to do home visits. This has seen a drop in home visits by GPs to veterans of 30% in the last 6 years.

#### Key issues

Government policies encourage veterans and others to remain in the family home rather than move into an aged care facility and as they get older some veterans are less able and less likely to travel to their GP unless it is an emergency. The ability for the health care system to deliver preventative health services in the home is vital in assisting to keep older people in their home; veterans particularly are more likely to have a number of chronic conditions requiring close monitoring.

Currently GPs are struggling with their patient workload which is the main reason why they are unable to undertake patient home visits and this workload is likely to increase. The use of practice nurses to conduct home visits for less urgent care and the very important routine monitoring of patients will reduce GP workload and ensure a better quality of care for aged veterans.

Some of the tasks that could be undertaken by practice nurses include medication reviews, routine monitoring, wound dressing, blood pressure checks, flu vaccinations, blood glucose

monitoring, home safety assessments and dementia assessments. Unlike some other health services provided in the home the GP practice nurse reports back to the veterans treating physician ensuring a better treatment management outcome. The Australian Medical Association supports the use of GP practice nurses.

This initiative is said to be revenue neutral for veterans with savings on a booked car with driver for appointments, a lesser chance of hospitalization and remaining in the family home for longer before admittance into an aged care facility. In the longer term the use of practice nurses should provide better clinical outcomes as well as being a money saver.

### Proposal

The TPI Federation recommends that the government creates a new general practice item number within the Local Medical Officer scheme to fund home visits by GP practice nurses to assist in the management of veteran patients who are suffering from complex and/or chronic conditions.

John (Blue) Ryan OAM  
National President