

MEDIA RELEASE

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Anaesthetists Warn Against Threat of Managed Care

The Australian Society of Anaesthetists (ASA) is concerned that the health insurance industry's push for Managed Care is gaining ground in Australia.

In a [draft determination](#) released 21 May, the ACCC favours (with conditions) a proposal from Honeysuckle Health (HH) and nib health funds to form and operate a health services buying group.

While the ACCC may not consider the proposal to be anti-competitive, the decision has much wider implications for the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

The ASA is strongly opposed to the HH/nib plan which would set a precedent, allowing health funds to collectively negotiate and administer contracts with healthcare providers.

ASA President Dr Suzi Nou says we must be alert to this threat.

"This proposal is effectively the on ramp to the managed care super highway that has overrun the American healthcare system," Dr Nou said.

"Australian medical specialists must remain free to make decisions in the best interests of their patients without burdensome pressure from contracts with health insurance companies," she warned.

"The payer of health services (insurance companies) must not be given the power to decide what treatments are on offer, where the treatment will be delivered, and who the treating doctor will be.

"We must preserve the right of all Australians to have a choice of doctor and protect the freedom of all doctors to make treatment decisions unhindered by commercial pressures.

"The HH/nib proposal represents a turning point for Australian healthcare. We call on the Government to block the proposal in the interests of maintaining affordable, accessible and equitable high-quality healthcare in Australia," Dr Nou said.

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The ASA, with more than 3,700 members, is the peak body and leading representative of anaesthetists in Australia. Since 1934 the ASA has been supporting, representing and educating anaesthetists to ensure the safest high-quality patient care.