



# REGISTERED NURSES 24/7 IN NURSING HOMES

## FEARS & FACTS

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recommended mandating a requirement for a **registered nurse to be on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week (RN 24/7)** at every Australian nursing home to provide, or direct the provision of, care.<sup>1</sup>

The Australian Labor Party, The Australian Greens and many Independent MPs and Senators **agree** with this recommendation and have announced they will implement this recommendation if elected at the May Federal Election.

The Morrison Government **did not agree** with this recommendation. The Morrison Government committed to a registered nurse on site in nursing homes for **16 hours a day**, not 24 hours a day.<sup>2</sup>

In response to commitments to RN 24/7 from all other major parties, the Morrison Government is claiming that there are not enough registered nurses to have one on site 24/7 in every nursing home.

This claim amounts to nothing more than a scare campaign and an attempt by the Morrison Government to excuse their inaction on aged care over the last decade.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) has surveyed members regularly over the last 6 years about working conditions in aged care and what's needed to fix the crisis in the sector.

**We know what the solutions are.**

## THE FACTS

### FEAR

There are not enough nurses to meet the requirement for at least 1 RN on site 24/7 in every nursing home.

### FACTS

1. Many nursing homes already have at least 1 RN on site 24/7.
  - a. The 2020 aged care workforce census reported that of Australia's 2,716 nursing homes, 80% already roster a registered nurse on duty overnight, 20 percent (n = 543) do not.<sup>3</sup>
2. Some States already require at least 1 RN on site 24/7.
  - a. Tasmania
    - i. Already has a requirement across the State for at least 1 RN on site 24/7.
  - b. Victoria
    - i. The vast majority of the State's more than 600 private aged care facilities have a requirement for at least 1 RN on site 24/7 under enterprise agreements.
    - ii. The State's more than 180 state-run public aged care facilities have legislated mandated, minimum ratios (under the *Safe Patient Care Act*). The Law requires one nurse to seven residents on morning shift, one nurse to eight residents on afternoon shift and one nurse to 15 residents on night shift.

- c. New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia
  - i. Already require at least 1 RN on site for morning and afternoon shifts and in some facilities at night. To meet the requirement for at least 1 RN on site 24/7 would need additional registered nurses in some facilities only.
3. From the above information, the ANMF estimates that just over 750 registered nurses would be needed to ensure at least 1 RN on site 24/7 in every nursing home.
4. The 2020 aged care workforce census reported that 239 nursing homes roster a registered nurse on call but not on duty on site. This means there is capacity for increasing the number of RNs in nursing homes to 24/7 from the existing registered nursing workforce.
5. More than 80% of RNs working in aged care currently work part time. In surveys conducted for the Royal Commission, a majority of ANMF members working in aged care indicated they would work more hours if they were offered by their employer. This means there is capacity for increasing the number of RNs in nursing homes to 24/7 from the existing registered nursing workforce.
6. Several hundred nursing graduates are unable to find secure meaningful employment each year. This means there is capacity for increasing the number of RNs in nursing homes to 24/7 from the existing registered nursing workforce.

## FEAR

There are not enough nurses in Australia who want to work in nursing homes.

## FACTS

1. Many aged care nurses, who have left the sector because the crisis has simply become too much to bear, have told the ANMF they would return to aged care if there were safe workloads, decent wages and support for them to provide quality care.
2. Nurses have told the ANMF they would be willing to work in aged care with fair wages in place, guaranteed minimum staffing ratios and with 24 hour registered nurse presence on site.
3. In a recent poll conducted by the ANMF, almost 3,500 nurses indicated they would work in the aged care sector if changes were made to improve the staffing, workloads and wages.
  - a. Almost 80% said if minimum staffing levels and skills mix were guaranteed – they would work in aged care.
  - b. More that 70% said if there was a requirement for at least 1 RN on site at all times – they would work in aged care.
  - c. 50% said if there was a 25% pay increase – they would work in aged care.

## FEAR

Australia will have to recruit nurses from overseas to meet the requirement for at least 1 RN on site 24/7.

## FACTS

1. Overseas qualified nurses have comprised a valuable part of Australia's nursing workforce for many years. While the ANMF supports permanent migration of nurses, we do not need to rely on overseas nurses alone to meet the requirement for at least 1 RN on site 24/7. With a plan to implement: ratios - guaranteed staffing levels and skills mix; RN 24/7; and, improve wages we know that nurses will be happy to work in aged care and do the job they love.

*Authorised by A. Butler, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Melbourne.*

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect. Online: Commonwealth of Australia. 2020. Available: <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government Department of Health. Ageing and Aged Care: Australian Government Response to the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. 2021. Available: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/05/australian-government-response-to-the-final-report-of-the-royal-commission-into-aged-care-quality-and-safety.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Australian Government Department of Health. Ageing and Aged Care for Workforce: 2020 Aged Care Workforce Census Report. Online: Australian Government Department of Health. 2021. Available: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/10/2020-aged-care-workforce-census.pdf>