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*I would like to say that Nursing Home work is very labour intensive. If I may quote an old saying (without meaning to be crude) it is about bums on seats. But not about theatre seats, about toilet and shower seats. If the residents could shower and toilet themselves they would not need to be in a Nursing Home, of course there is more to it than that, but it is the main reason they need to be there.*

*There is a lot of money wasted on paperwork but paperwork does not help feed residents who have lost the ability to do it themselves or to attend to their hygiene.*

*Of course there has to be some paperwork on admission and a care plan to help us understand the residents and plan their care. We should not have to do paperwork to justify funding because there is a process to decide if a person needs Nursing Home care done before they are recommended for a Nursing Home.*

*The whole process needs to be streamlined before all we "baby boomers" start to come into Nursing Homes.*

*I believe that there should be a set of admission papers to gather information about residents. It should be uniform over the whole country and also a format for a Nursing care Plan that should be easy and non-time consuming to fill in. In fact I would like to have a chance to contribute to this.*

*Also I think there needs to be a nurse-patient ratio. I think that the morning shift should have 1 Nurse to 6 residents, the afternoon shift should have 1 Nurse to 8 residents and the night shift 1 nurse to 12-15 residents. As well as these there should be one Charge Nurse to 30 residents except for the Night Shift where the charge would be one of the two. And I believe there are peak times that residents need attention. These times are 8-11 am and 5-8 pm. As well as the ratios that I have mentioned I think there should be one three hour shift extra at these times for every 20 residents.*

*Thank you for taking the time to read this.*

*Maureen*

*Peden*

*I welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians.*

*As a nurse or midwife currently working in the health system I have a vested interest in ensuring the care that's provided to older Australians within this system is of the highest quality.*

*The recent federal budget commitment for aged care goes some way in addressing a number of critical issues affecting the industry – particularly the funding for education of existing staff and for the examination of a national regulation system for aged care workers.*

*However, further reform of the aged care industry is still very much needed, and well overdue, to ensure our aged care system can meet the challenges facing it in coming decades.*

### **Keep nursing in aged care by reversing the decline in Registered Nurse and Enrolled Nurse numbers through regulated skills mix ratios**

In 2003 there were 27,210 (FTE) registered and enrolled nurses in the aged care sector<sup>1</sup>. In 2007 that number had dropped to 23,103 (FTE)<sup>2</sup>. That's a decline of over 4100 (FTE) nurses, which is a decrease of 23 percent in registered nurses and 11 percent in enrolled nurses.

There needs to be more, not less, RNs and ENs employed in aged care – and at all times of day – to ensure there is the right mix of skills in the nursing team so quality time and care can be provided to each resident.

Assistants in Nursing (AIN) and Personal Carers (PCs), which are increasing in numbers in aged care, are doing an outstanding job under very difficult circumstances. But AINs need the support of skilled RNs and ENs to ensure quality care is provided to every resident.

Footnote 1&2: Access Economics (2009) *Nurses in Residential Aged Care*, Report for the Australian Nursing Federation, p. 10.

### **Protect the integrity of nursing and ensure quality care for aged care residents by ensuring all people who provide nursing care are licensed**

Aged care should be delivered by licensed nursing staff to ensure the professionalism of the aged care sector.

Assistants in Nursing and care staff should be recognised for their professional skills through a national licensing system.

### **Close the wages gap to retain and recruit quality staff**

Nurses working in aged care are paid significantly less than their counterparts in other sectors.

In fact aged care nurses, in some states and territories, earn, on average, about \$300 a week less than their colleagues working in other areas of the health system. Yet they have undertaken the same training and education and have equivalent nurse qualifications, experience and workloads as public sector nurses.

Aged care providers claim funding mechanisms in aged care have hampered their ability to provide pay parity. However there is currently no requirement on operators to spend any of their government funding on direct care or even wages.

This disparity in wages makes it increasingly difficult to attract sufficient nurses to the sector.

There must be better wages in aged care to keep nurses in the sector.

## **Ensure transparency and accountability for the funding provided for the care of residents**

The federal government funds nursing homes but does not place requirements on nursing home owners to show how much is spent on direct care including nurses' wages.

A clearly defined amount of funding needs to be allocated to staffing and direct care services. Residents need to be allocated a set number of hours of staff time according to the level of care they require.

A process must be established and enforced to ensure aged care providers are accountable for government funding and transparent in how that funding is spent.