

Ref: JL/MC:dd

30 July 2010

Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601

Email: [agedcare@pc.gov.au](mailto:agedcare@pc.gov.au)

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Caring for Older Australians inquiry. Rather than providing the Commission with a full submission, the ACTU wishes to affirm its support for reform of the aged care sector to deliver better outcomes for service users and workers.

The ACTU represents 47 unions and almost two million working Australians, including older workers, workers with caring responsibilities and workers in the aged care sector.

Australian unions are concerned that aged care in Australia is failing to provide the level of care needed for elderly Australians. The critical underfunding of the sector is resulting in an inability to guarantee adequate accommodation and nutritious meals for residents, or to attract and retain qualified staff.

The ACTU Congress 2009 passed a resolution calling for:

- Increased public funding for the sector;
- Adequate funding to ensure that staff working in the sector receive pay and conditions comparable to those paid in public hospitals;
- Improved accountability for expenditure of public funds and the provision of services within the sector;
- A stronger public sector presence in the direct provision of aged care to establish standards, long term stability of the sector and universal access to quality care;
- Establishment of enforceable minimum standards of nutritional, medication and clinical care, including specific targets of nurse/carer to patient ratios.

I urge you to consider these issues as part of your inquiry. The ACTU understands that several affiliate unions who represent workers in the sector will provide submissions to this inquiry. The ACTU supports their submissions.

Yours sincerely,

**Jeff Lawrence**  
Secretary