



QUALITY AGED CARE ACTION GROUP INC

**Inquiry into the Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio
Disclosure) Bill 2018**

20 September 2018

Introduction

Quality Aged Care Action Group Incorporated (QACAG) is a community group in NSW that aims to improve the quality of life for people in residential and community aged care settings. QACAG is made up of people from many interests and backgrounds brought together by common concerns about the quality of care for people receiving aged care services.

QACAG Inc. was established in 2005 and became incorporated in 2007. Membership includes: older people, some of whom are receiving aged care in NSW nursing homes or the community; relatives and friends of care recipients; carers; people with aged care experience including current and retired nurses; aged care workers and community members concerned with improving aged care. Membership also includes representatives from: Older Women's Network; Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association of NSW Inc.; Senior Rights Service; NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association and the Retired Teachers' Association.

QACAG members welcome this Bill as it furthers transparency within the sector. However, it must be sufficiently robust to ensure it covers all the information required by consumers to determine the quality of service provision.

As representatives of care recipients, their families and the people who care for them we are deeply concerned about the dilution of skills, particularly in residential aged care facilities. Placing a loved one in aged care is not a decision taken lightly, and has long term emotional consequences. It is of the utmost importance that people in this position are assured that safe care will be provided. We believe this can only be achieved if there are mandated staffing ratios and skills mix in place.

No-one enters aged care as a lifestyle choice. It is always because the persons' needs are so great that they cannot be cared for at home, by informal carers. We believe that the government has lost sight of this. In determining that there is no mandatory requirement for registered nurses to form an essential part of the basic skills mix in aged care is a recipe for disaster.

Whilst these proposed amendments will not secure access to registered nurses for our loved ones, they will empower the community to make decisions about which services provide better staffing and skills mix.

However, we note there is no mention of the Director of Nursing title, or Assistant in Nursing. Unless we ensure these roles are acknowledged through legislation we risk losing them. Clinical governance of a residential aged care facility can make the difference between quality care and care failures. We need to ensure the role of the Director of Nursing remains integral to the staffing mix.

Assistants in Nursing assure consumers that there are nurses employed as part of the skills mix. Our understanding is that Assistants in Nursing are titled as such, because they work under the direction of a registered nurse. Again, having workers with this title offers assurance of clinical care.

We must not lose sight of the reason we need a fit for purpose aged care workforce. The primary focus must be on achieving a safe standard of care for those we entrust to others for their most basic of needs. These are our most loved parents, relatives, friends and children. Whilst aged care providers must remain profitable to survive, the provision of safe staffing is non-negotiable.

In addition, we note there is no accounting for level of need within the resident cohort. A totally high care facility may require much more than one registered nurse, whereas a low care five bed rural facility may need a higher proportion of allied health and only one registered nurse. We would like to see mention of the acuity levels of people accommodated in this Bill, to enable consumers to make informed judgements about sufficiency of staffing.

Thank you for receiving our submission.

Margaret Zanghi

President

On behalf of the Quality Aged Care Action Group Inc, NSW

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