



*His Excellency General the
Honourable David John Hurley AC
DSC (Retd), Governor-General of
the Commonwealth of Australia,
and Her Excellency Mrs Linda
Hurley, Patrons*

Palliative Care Australia Limited
ACN 625 082 493
ABN 85 363 187 904
PO Box 124
Fyshwick ACT 2609
T 02 6232 0700
palliativecare.org.au
pca@palliativecare.org.au

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into the provisions of the Aged Care Amendment (Implementing Care Reform) Bill 2022

Thank you for the opportunity and invitation for Palliative Care Australia (PCA) to make a submission on the provisions of the Aged Care Amendment (Implementing Care Reform) Bill 2022. PCA offers the following comments on the three Schedules of the Bill:

Schedule 1—Registered nurses
Aged Care Act 1997

Schedule 2—Capping home care charges
Aged Care Act 1997

Schedule 3—Transparency of information
Aged Care Act 1997

1. Amendments relating to registered nurses

The Bill establishes a new responsibility in the *Aged Care Act* for approved providers of residential care and certain kinds of flexible care as specified in the *Quality of Care Principles 2014* (Quality of Care Principles) to ensure that a registered nurse (within the meaning of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*) is on site and on duty at all times (that is, 24 hours each day, 7 days each week) at each residential facility operated by them.

The new responsibility is intended to complement existing approved provider responsibilities in the aged care legislation, including maintaining an adequate number of appropriately skilled staff to ensure the care needs of care recipients are met, and to provide such care and services as are specified in the Quality of Care Principles.

PCA is supportive of this component of the Bill. PCA is on the record as supporting the Government's commitment to a policy for aged care reform and investment that will require all residential aged care facilities to have a registered nurse (RN) on site 24 hours a day, 7 days per week (24/7). PCA has also advocated that these registered nurses are trained in palliative care as a key building block of this policy.

Currently, over one third of all deaths in Australia occur in residential aged care facilities.¹ As Australia's population ages, the number of people using aged care services will further increase as will the demand for palliative care in both community and residential aged care. In April 2022, PCA conducted its annual national attitudes survey which showed that 96% of Australians believe it is important that aged care services are able to provide palliative care to residents and clients.

Through submissions from PCA and other aged care peak bodies, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recognised the significant role palliative care has in aged care and the need for it to be core business for aged care providers. The Royal Commission made a range of palliative care recommendations including:

- Compulsory dementia and palliative care training for aged care workers (Recommendation 80). PCA believes that in order for palliative care to be core business in aged care and to support the recommendations, it is essential for the aged care service RN workforce to have palliative care skills.

RNs must be trained in minimum levels of core competencies to provide care for people with a life-limiting illness with straightforward needs including:

- Palliative care needs assessment and setting goals of care
- Supporting people with advance care planning
- Symptom management and administration of medications
- Supporting psychosocial needs
- Providing support to personal care workers
- Identification of complex needs and referral to specialist palliative care services.
- Grief and bereavement support for residents, families and carers.

PCA supports the intent of this Bill and would welcome any amendments that support the RNs working in Residential Aged Care to have training in palliative care.

2. Amendments relating to capping home care charges

The Bill introduces a new power into the *Aged Care Act* that will enable the Government to cap charges that approved providers of home care (home care providers) may charge care recipients. It also removes the home care providers' ability to charge exit amounts.

PCA is supportive of the intent of these amendments and note that they will benefit many people receiving palliative care and their families and carers. Measures will need to be in place to ensure that services are not reduced or limited by providers (or charged for in other ways) to recoup perceived lost earnings.

3. Amendments relating to transparency of information

The Bill introduces a mandatory requirement into the *Aged Care Act* for the Secretary of the Department of Health and Aged Care to publish information in relation to aged care services, including information about approved providers of those aged care services, in accordance with the *Information Principles 2014*. The Schedule will allow the information to be published.

PCA is supportive of the intent of these amendments.

¹ KPMG (2020) based on AIHW data, [Investing to Save: The Economics of Increased Investment in Palliative Care in Australia](#), page 23.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. If you require further clarification or would like me to discuss our proposal for Residential Aged Care Nurses to have training in palliative care, I would be pleased to do so.

Yours sincerely

Camilla Rowland
CEO
Palliative Care Australia

