



Submission to

Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport

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

October 2018

 106 Victoria St, West End Q 4101
 GPO Box 1289, Brisbane Q 4001
 (07) 3840 1444
 (07) 3844 9387
 qnmu@qnmu.org.au
 www.qnmu.org.au

submission

Introduction

The Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union (QNMU) thanks the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport (the Committee) for providing the opportunity to make a submission to the *Inquiry into the Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018* (the bill).

Nursing and midwifery is the largest occupational group in Queensland Health (QH) and one of the largest across the Queensland government. The QNMU is the principal health union in Queensland covering all categories of workers that make up the nursing workforce including registered nurses (RN), registered midwives (RM), enrolled nurses (EN) and assistants in nursing (AIN) who are employed in the public, private and not-for-profit health sectors including aged care.

Our 59,000 members work across a variety of settings from single person operations to large health and non-health institutions, and in a full range of classifications from entry level trainees to senior management. The vast majority of nurses and midwives in Queensland are members of the QNMU.

Recommendation

The QNMU recommends the parliament pass the bill.

The QNMU supports the bill in seeking the publication of ratios of aged care recipients to staff members in residential aged care, with the aim to create greater public transparency in the provision of residential aged care services. While the bill does not address how staff members are used, the capture of how many are employed in aged care and the skill mix of those workers goes some way in addressing the concerns of understaffing in the aged care sector.

The QNMU has long advocated for staff ratios in aged care. This bill aligns with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation's (ANMF) and the QNMU's ratios for aged care campaign "*Ratios for aged care make them law. Now!*" This campaign highlights how fewer nurses and carers are expected to care for an increasing number of aged care residents with complex needs (Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, 2018).

The recent announcement by the federal government to establish a Royal Commission into the Aged Care sector, highlights there are profound problems in aged care. According to the

government media release about the Royal Commission “Australians must be able to trust that their loved ones will be cared for appropriately” (Prime Minister of Australia, 2018). Certainly, staffing ratios are key to ensuring staffing is at a level where those who live in residential aged care facilities are adequately cared for.

Research shows that a certain minimum level of aged care staffing is a necessary condition for good quality care in aged care facilities (Arling, Kane, Mueller, Bershadsky, & Degenholtz 2007, Hyer et al. 2011 & Kim, Kovner, Harrington, Greene, & Mezey, 2009). According to the ANMF’s research findings the minimum care requirements in residential aged care facilities is 4.30 resident care hours per day, and a skill mix requirement of 30% RN, 20% EN and 50% personal care worker (Willis et al., 2016).

Reporting of staffing ratios will increase transparency of practice and provide public accountability in residential aged care services. This bill is an opportunity to provide greater disclosure in aged care.

References

- Arling, G., Kane, R., Mueller, C., Bershadsky, J. & Degenholtz, H. (2007). Nursing effort and quality of care for nursing home residents. *The Gerontologist*, 47(5), 672-682
- Prime Minister of Australia. (2018, 16 September). *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/royal-commission-aged-care-quality-and-safety>
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation. (2018). *Ratios for aged care campaign launch*. Retrieved from <http://anmf.org.au/featured-stories/entry/ratios-for-aged-care-campaign-launch>
- Backhaus, R., Beerens, H., Van Rossum., Verbeek, H., & Hamers, J. (2018). Rethinking the staff-quality relationship in nursing homes. *Journal of Nutrition, Health and Aging*, 22(6), 634-638.
- Hyer, K., Thomas, K., Branch, L., Harman, J., Johnson, C. & Weech-Maldonado, R. (2011). The influence of nurse staffing levels on quality of care in nursing homes. *The Gerontologist*, 51(5), 610-616.

- Kim, H., Kovner, C., Harrington, C., Greene, W. & Mezey, M. (2009). A panel data analysis of relationships of nursing home staffing levels and standards to regulatory deficiencies. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 64B(2), 269-278.
- Willis, E., Price, K., Bonner, R., Henderson, J., Gibson, T., Hurley, J., Blackman, I., Toffoli, L and Currie, T. (2016). *Meeting residents' care needs: A study of the requirement for nursing and personal care staff*. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation