



media release

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Nurses want early action to fix aged care

120 nurses from around Australia will today urge Federal Health Minister, Nicola Roxon to take action and address major challenges facing the aged care sector in the next decade.

Ged Kearney, Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) said that Ms Roxon will address the Biennial Australian Nursing Federation Conference in Manly this morning on the challenges facing health systems across Australia, in particular the challenge of the ageing population.

"We will urge the Federal Government to address the workforce issues that threaten to undermine the future of the aged care sector in Australia.

"At the top of the list will be assistance from the Federal Government to address the massive pay gap between aged care nursing staff and their colleagues in the public health system, which is up to \$15,000 per year.

"This is one of the key factors leading to a steady decline in the average training levels of aged care staff.

"With the demand for aged care services set to soar because of the ageing of the population these issues need to be addressed now.

"Like climate change, early action now will cost less than waiting for the effects of the ageing population to hit the aged care sector.

"The ANF has a four point plan to address these issues and ensure Australia continues to have a high quality aged care sector.

"Firstly, we need to halt the exodus of Registered and Enrolled nurses from aged care and ensure our nursing homes have the right mix of staff to get the job done by introducing a minimum staffing ratio.

"Secondly, we need to lift skill levels across the board, from nurses to personal carers by ensuring there is a minimum qualification requirement and a well structured career path for nurses and personal carers.

"Thirdly, to get more people into the industry and to hold onto the excellent staff we already have, we need to increase pay.

"And finally, we need make sure that any extra funding from the Federal Government flows through to aged care staff so they can deliver the best care possible - that means proper acquittal processes for aged care funding," Ms Kearney said.

Background

Australia today has some 2,800 residential aged care facilities providing care to more than 160,000 elderly people, 70 per cent of whom receive high-level care and 55 percent of whom are 85 years of age or older.

By 2020 the number of residents is projected to reach more than 250,000 - a 56 percent increase.

And the highest area of growth will be among residents aged 95 or over who will need the highest level of care we can give them.

The high-care proportion of residential aged care is going to need to almost triple in the next 25 years to keep up with demand.

The [Because We Care campaign](#) is aimed at raising awareness and recognition of Australia's highly skilled and dedicated aged care nursing and care workforce.

Throughout 2009 the ANF has been asking community members, nursing home staff, friends and relatives of residents to sign the "Charter for Quality Aged Care".

The Charter calls on the Federal Government to properly fund aged care and support the campaign's four key objectives;

- 1) The right balance of skills and nursing hours so that nursing and care staff can provide quality care for every resident.
- 2) Fair pay for aged care nurses and care staff who are paid up to \$300 per week less than nurses in other sectors.
- 3) Recognition of the professional skills of Assistants in Nursing and care staff through a national licensing system.
- 4) A guarantee that taxpayer funding is used for nursing and care staff for each resident.

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The ANF, with 170,000 members, is the professional and industrial voice for nurses and midwives in Australia

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