



media release

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Landmark pay equity report highlights double jeopardy of caring for the elderly

Nurses are experiencing a double-barrel of discrimination through both the gender wage gap and their employment in the Government-funded aged care sector, a new Federal Government report has found.

Australian Nursing Federation Federal Secretary Ged Kearney has applauded the pay equity report *Making it Fair*, released yesterday, which acknowledges the inequality experienced by nurses, especially those in the aged care sector.

The report highlights the continuing gap in wages between women and men and repeatedly points to the aged care sector as an example of ingrained and sustained discrimination.

"Despite the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in 1972 granting men and women the same minimum wage, for many women equal pay is not a reality," she said.

"I applaud the report's findings that action needs to be taken to improve wages and conditions for aged care nurses whose work is largely undervalued despite their expertise."

The report urges relevant ministers including Minister for Finance, Lindsay Tanner, to act on the dire situation in aged care:

"There was a great deal of evidence presented that went to the situation of women employed in the aged care sector... it is clear that action needs to be taken to improve wages and conditions...I am aware of the dependence on the Australian government for the funding of this sector. I urge the responsible Ministers... to look at how we can responsibly increase the funding for wages in this sector" writes Sharryn Jackson MP and Chair in the foreword.

"Aged care is staffed predominantly by women who are paid less than their counterparts with comparable skills and qualifications," Ms Kearney from the ANF said.

"The ANF - through the Because We Care campaign - has been calling for aged care nurses to receive wages and career opportunities that reflect their education, value to the community and hard work."

"This is vital when pegged beside our rising aging population who are relying on nurses to care for them in their final years."

Caring for the elderly should not translate into less pay and more work as is the current reality."

"Nurses in the aged care sector are paid up to \$300 less than other nurses. This coupled with an unreasonable workload has seen a 23 per cent decrease in the number of registered nurses and 11 per cent in enrolled nurses in aged care since 2003."

"We urge the Federal Government to consider the findings in the report and increase funding to the sector in the 2010 Federal budget. This funding must also be transparent to ensure it reaches nurse pay packets and is adequate to ensure fair and reasonable pay," 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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