



Frequently asked questions about aged care and nurses working in the system

Q. How many nursing homes are operating in Australia?

A. As at June 2007 there were 2,813 accredited nursing homes in Australia.

Q. How many people are cared for in nursing homes?

A. As at 30 June 2007, there were 154,549 people being cared for in nursing homes.

Q. How many people require high levels of care in nursing homes?

A. It is estimated that 70% of people who live in nursing homes need complex nursing care – that is their medical needs are so acute they require a high level of nursing care each day, whether because of chronic illness or dementia or both.

Q. How many registered and enrolled nurses work in the aged care sector?

A. In 2003 there were 27,210 (FTE) registered and enrolled nurses in the aged care sector. In 2007 that number had dropped to 23,103 (FTE) a decline of over 4100 (FTE) nurses which is a decrease of 23% in registered nurses and 11% in enrolled nurses.

Q. How many assistants in nursing/personal care assistants work in aged care?

A. At the same time as the numbers of registered and enrolled nurses decreased, the number of assistants in nursing rose. In 2003 assistants in nursing numbered 42,943 (FTE). By 2007 that number had increased to 50,542 (FTE) – a staggering rise of over 7,500.

Q. Why do nurses in aged care get paid substantially less than other nurses in the health system?

A. The Federal Government funds nursing homes but does not place requirements on nursing home owners to show how much is spent on direct care including nurses' wages.

Q. What are the campaign objectives?

A. There are four objectives, they include;

- seeking mechanisms that ensure openness and accountability in the way taxpayer funds are spent
- fair pay for nurses and care staff in aged care who are now paid up to \$300 a week less than nurses in other sectors
- introducing the right balance of skills and working hours so that nurses and care staff can provide quality care
- recognition of the professional skills of assistants in nursing and care staff through a national licensing system.