



## media release

10 May 2010

### Budget 2010: It's time to deliver for aged care

Ged Kearney, Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation has called on the Rudd Government to begin addressing the chronic workforce issues facing the aged care sector in the Federal Budget to be released tomorrow (May 11).

Ms Kearney said the missing piece in the Government's massive health reform program was a long term strategy to fix the falling numbers of nurses and care staff in the aged care system.

"From 2003 to 2007 the numbers of aged care residents increased by 15,000 while the number of nurses actually declined by 4,000. They have largely been replaced by less qualified staff.

"These hardworking Assistants in Nursing and personal carers want to deliver quality care for residents but are hampered by a lack of training and professional development.

"Quality of care for residents is directly linked to the skills of the workforce. If you don't get the right skills mix then the health and quality of life for residents is reduced. It also feeds directly into hospital admissions, placing increased pressure on public hospitals.

"The ANF believes it is time for the government to act and develop a comprehensive aged care workforce strategy with the following key elements;

- Strategies and funding to improve the skills mix of aged care staff,
- A national licensing system for aged care staff, and
- Improved funding transparency of aged care providers to ensure funding goes to the care of residents, and
- Action to start closing the \$300 wages gap between aged care staff and other health workers.

"The Australian Nursing Federation has advocated strongly over the last twelve months through our Because We Care campaign for action to be taken by the Federal Government in this budget to address these problems.

"The government's recent announcements in aged care – in particular the terms of reference for the Productivity Commission review of aged care – is the first sign of hope in a long time for aged care staff.

"The problems in aged care though are too urgent to await the outcome of the review and real practical steps can and should be taken now.

"Kevin Rudd has within his grasp a historic opportunity to fix aged care and we are urging him to take that opportunity in this budget," 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, by focusing on:

- The right balance of skills and nursing hours so that nursing and care staff can provide quality care for every resident.
- Fair pay for aged care nurses and care staff.
- Recognition of the professional skills of Assistants in Nursing and care staff through a national licensing system.
- A guarantee that taxpayer funding is used for nursing and personal care for each resident.

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### ANF Journals

Australian Nursing Journal  
Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing  
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ABN 41 816 898 298