

# QUEENSLAND NURSES UNION

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Queensland nurses take their aged care message to the federal Treasurer

#### *Final campaign push to make the 2010 Federal Budget, the Aged Care Budget*

Queenslanders are being asked to email federal Treasurer, Wayne Swan, asking him to make aged care the centrepiece of his 2010 budget.

The “Tell the Treasurer to fix aged care” email campaign is part of the Queensland Nurses Union’s (QNU) and Australian Nursing Federation’s national *Because We Care: Quality care for older Australians* campaign.

QNU secretary, Gay Hawksworth, said from today the *Because We Care* campaign is deliberately switching its focus to the Treasurer ahead of this year’s budget, to ensure he gets the message personally and not just from his ministerial and parliamentary colleagues.

“Our message to Mr Swan is clear and simple: It’s time for the government to start delivering for aged care on Budget Day this May.

“In this year’s budget he needs to commit adequate funding to ensure:

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 the 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 personal care for each resident.

“Nurses are also asking members of the wider community to help them re-inforce this message by emailing Mr Swan. This can be done via the QNU website at [www.qnu.org.au](http://www.qnu.org.au)

“During March and April the ‘Email the Treasurer’ campaign will be supported by a Statewide letterbox drop and a new round of targeted television and newspaper advertising, highlighting the needs of the aged care sector.

“Queenslanders are also asked to help with the letterbox drop by contacting the QNU on 3840 1444.

“For nearly 12 months now we have been reminding federal Labor members that providing quality aged care is one of the biggest challenges facing Australia and that this year’s federal budget needs to start addressing the issues of staffing and funding if we are to meet the challenge.

“We cannot tolerate a system that can leave one registered nurse responsible for as many as 100 residents. We cannot tolerate a system that then pays that same nurse up to \$300 per week less than their colleagues working in hospitals.

“The 2010 federal budget has to be the *Aged Care Budget*. It is as simple as that. Failure to make this happen could see nurses campaigning on the issue during the next federal election campaign. Nurses, through the *Your Rights at Work* campaign during the last federal election, have shown they are strong and effective campaigners if they decide something is worth campaigning for.

“Hopefully, Mr Swan will listen to this message as he finalises this year’s budget over the next few months,” Ms Hawksworth said.

The *Because We Care* campaign, which was launched in March last year, has so far involved a first round of television and newspaper advertising, the collection of tens of thousands of aged care postcards and their delivery to federal politicians and workplace visits aimed at organising aged care nurses into effective community campaigners.

Campaign objectives 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; and
- recognition of the professional skills of assistants in nursing and care staff through a national licensing system.

**End**

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