



## Older Women's Network

20 May 2015

The Hon. Jillian Skinner MP  
Minister for Health  
Governor Macquarie Tower  
Level 31, 1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

The Older Women's Network (OWN) of NSW is most concerned that consideration is being given to changing the requirement for Registered Nurses (RN) to be available within residential aged care facilities 24 hours per day, seven days per week. It is deeply worrying to us that residents and in particular older women who according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) make up 70% of residential aged care recipients, will be denied appropriate and timely care by such a change.

Not only will this add to the pressures already felt by a strained residential aged care workforce, it will considerably add to the workload of the public health system with more residents needing to transfer to hospital settings for acute care services. Significantly, we know that frequent moves between care settings for older frail residents can and does result in poorer health outcomes. This too adds to the strain and anxieties already experienced by the families and friends of such residents.

We remain perplexed by the concept of such a change given that as at June 2013 AIHW reported that 82% of Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) appraisals for residents in residential aged care were high care appraisals. This speaks to the acuity of this resident population and the need for more RNs to deliver care and not less. Providers themselves will tell you that resident care needs are increasing and this is clearly reflected in the ACFI appraisals they themselves are submitting and the financial subsidies they are claiming.

The current situation itself is alarming to our membership. We are astounded that it is currently acceptable for aged care providers to make available only one RN to up to 120 and in sometimes instances more, vulnerable aged care residents. How can this possibly be reflective of the quality aged care system that Australia would like to pride itself upon?

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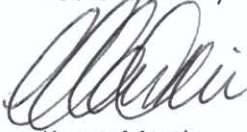
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We don't accept that these proposed changes are being driven by a lack of RNs prepared to enter the industry. We do believe however that the existing high RN to resident ratios are a significant disincentive to any RN considering a move to aged care. Further shifting the responsibilities for such things as S8 medications to general care staff has the potential to see this group similarly overwhelmed and disenfranchised.

OWN represents some 2,000 older women at the NSW State level all of whom are entitled to, and expect, consistent, safe and quality care for our aged care population. We therefore urge you to keep the legal requirement for RNs in aged care 24/7 and ensure NSW sets the standard for the provision of quality aged care services in Australia.

Yours sincerely



Karen Martin

CEO

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