

The Hon. Jillian Skinner, MP  
Minister for Health  
GPO Box 5341  
Sydney NSW 2001

31 March 2016

**RE: Future of registered nurses in aged care in NSW**

Dear Minister,

New South Wales has the highest number of residential aged care facilities across all Australian states and territories. At an average age of 83.5, people entering these facilities are older and frailer than ever before, many with chronic and complex care needs. Living in a residential aged care facility is no longer a lifestyle choice, it's a necessity for people requiring around the clock care and supervision.

Currently, 80 per cent of all people living in long-term aged care facilities have been assessed as having high-care needs and these facilities appropriately receive funding at a high-care level. The *NSW Public Health Act (2010)* protects people with high care needs living in many residential aged care facilities by requiring aged care providers to have a minimum of one registered nurse on site at all times.

When the current state legislation is amended to reflect changes that have occurred at the Commonwealth level, it should maintain the provision of registered nurses in aged care facilities with residents who require a high level of care. Such a legal requirement is neither burdensome nor financially restrictive to providers, given they are already funded to accommodate high-care residents.

The NSW government has a duty of care to ensure there is no further minimisation or dilution of skill-mix within residential aged care facilities. There is also a moral obligation to guarantee people who reside in them who have high care needs are supported by legislation that ensures sufficient registered nurses and appropriately skilled and regulated care workers are on site at all times.

From extensive evidence presented to the General Purpose Standing Committee No.3 *Registered Nurses in NSW nursing homes Inquiry*, as well as during consultations through the Aged Care Steering Committee, it is evident registered nurses are pivotal to leading a high standard of continuous care within residential aged care settings.

We urge you to do the right thing for the 59,252 people living in residential aged care facilities throughout NSW. People with high care needs, living in a residential aged care facility, must have on site access to a registered nurse at all times.

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