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POOR STAFFING IN AGED CARE RESULTING IN ABUSE OF ELDERLY

ANMF Says It's Time For Government to Act on Damning New Report

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) says it's time for the Government to fix the crisis in aged care, in the wake of a new damning report which contains disturbing evidence showing how the lack of minimum staffing regulations and appropriate skills mix has resulted in the abuse of elderly, vulnerable nursing home patients.

Launched today on World Elder Abuse Day 2017, the Australian Law Reform Commission's report, *Elder Abuse – A National Legal Response*, found that the proportion of registered and enrolled nurses has decreased and the proportion of Assistants in Nursing/Personal Care Workers (AIN/PCW) has increased. The report outlines that 70% of direct care workers in residential care are AIN/PCW, some of whom have no minimum training qualifications.

The ANMF says this must be fixed by the Federal Government and is calling for the introduction of a skills mix of Registered Nurses (RN) 30%, Enrolled Nurses (EN) 20% and AIN/PCW 50% as the minimum skills mix to ensure safe staffing in aged care. Hours of care per day must also be addressed as a priority.

"Residents should receive an average of 4 hours and 18 minutes of care per day – compared to the current 2.84 hours being received," said Annie Butler, the ANMF's Acting Federal Secretary.

"Clearly, there are simply not enough staff in aged care, with one witness reporting that there was 'one qualified nurse caring for 85 people in a nursing home on a public holiday'. The report's evidence and recommendations are a wake-up call for the Government, regulators and industry stakeholders to act on the crisis in aged care.

"One witness said '[w]e tolerate a level of staffing and staff mix in aged care that would close wards in the acute system. Despite years of discussion and criticism it is still possible to work with extremely vulnerable older people while having no relevant qualification. This should be an outrage'.

"One registered nurse reported, 'where I work NEGLECT would be without a doubt the main form of elder abuse in residential aged care'. ANMF members provided evidence that the lack of staffing can lead to instances of inadvertent abuse of elders."

Ms Butler said the ANMF welcomed the recommendation for a comprehensive review of staffing levels against legislative standards.

"It re-affirms our ongoing calls for the Federal Government to legislate for a minimum number of registered and enrolled nurses and AIN/PCW to residents and ensure that vulnerable nursing home residents are cared for and importantly, protected from abuse."

The ANMF, with over 259,000 members, is the industrial and professional voice for nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing in Australia.

ANMF media inquiries: 0411 254 390.