

19 February 2021

Aged Care Royal Commission Report – Can't Come Soon Enough

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) are eagerly anticipating the release of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety report and recommendations to address unsafe staffing, skill mix, and support for the aged care sector.

“For our members in the aged care sector in Tasmania, the challenges they face are as real as those widely reported in the media interstate. Specifically, poor staffing levels of Registered Nurses and Care Workers driving issues for staff and importantly residents in the residential aged care sector,” said ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary Emily Shepherd.

ANMF members have reported that there is no urgency or concern about replacing staff who may be unwell and can not attend a shift. At a number of Southern Cross Care facilities in the State, shifts have been worked with up to 10 staffing vacancies, including Care Workers and Nursing staff.

“Not replacing sick leave results in the staff who are on shift working incredibly hard trying to meet the needs of the residents in their care. However, those staff are not superhuman and of course, residents miss out on their meals, exercise, and even being toileted in a timely manner. Providers appear non-plussed by the impact this has on staff and residents, not to mention the safety risks.”

At time when the spotlight has been on residential aged care like never before, aged care providers continue to cut staff and therefore care for residents. At a Regis Facility in the North of the State, just one carer is responsible for covering the entire memory support unit overnight. Meanwhile at Mayshaw, providers only allow 40 minutes of care per resident per 24 hours under the current staffing model, and in the State's North West at Southern Cross Care's Yarrandoo facility, the provider has proposed to cut 150 hours from the kitchen and servery roster, which will no doubt increase workloads for care workers and nurses.

“The Federal Government must act to address the ongoing ingrained issues in aged care. The current governance and safety frameworks are failing staff and the elderly in their care. The ANMF have been staunch advocates for the aged care sector and in November we wrote to providers at Mayshaw, Scottsdale, and Swansea to highlight unsafe staffing levels. However, these were not addressed. During their recent accreditation May Shaw Scottsdale had nine unmet requirements, while May Shaw Swansea had two unmet requirements.”

The ANMF have been involved in every hearing during the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and have made extensive submissions and statements on behalf of members. The focus of these contributions have been:

- Mandated staffing ratios – minimum staffing levels and skills mix
- Legislated requirements for clinical governance, leadership and expertise
- Legislated transparency and accountability measures
- Guaranteeing workforce capacity and capability
- Registration of unregulated care-workers

“The Federal Government cannot wait any longer to take action on aged care. They called for the Royal Commission and they must now take action on the recommendations to improve the quality of life and safety for those vulnerable elderly in our population who rely on the aged care sector.”

“End”

Media contact:

Emily Shepherd

Mobile: 0400 884 021

Email: emily.shepherd@anmftas.org.au