



MEDIA RELEASE

Older Australians living in nursing homes deserve the highest quality of care

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

29 October 2015

The Upper House committee inquiring into the need for registered nurses in New South Wales nursing homes has today tabled its report.

The inquiry was established principally to investigate the requirement for registered nurses to be on duty in nursing homes at all times, as expressed in section 104(1)(a) of the New South Wales *Public Health Act 2010*. The committee was tasked with examining this issue in the context of amendments to Commonwealth aged care legislation that have consequently impacted on the operability of this state provision.

The Chair of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3, Ms Jan Barham MLC, stated: ‘Older Australians living in nursing homes are among the most vulnerable members of our society, needing and deserving of the highest quality of care.’

Ms Barham said: ‘The committee acknowledges that the Commonwealth has jurisdictional responsibility for aged care, but ultimately we were not convinced that the regulatory framework at that level adequately ensures that a high standard of care is delivered to residents through its standards. We therefore support the current legislative requirement for registered nurses to be on duty at all times in New South Wales nursing homes.’

‘In recognition of the changing needs of older Australians entering into residential care, the committee has determined that it is both important and appropriate that the definition of ‘nursing home’ under the *Public Health Act* be based directly on residents’ assessed needs. This link between funding and registered nursing coverage allows for the provision of person-centred support’, said Ms Barham.

‘The committee acknowledges that the nature of high care needs is broad and that there are different types of high care needs. The inquiry heard concerns from aged care providers about the financial impact in meeting the requirement, and with the limited availability of registered nurses, particularly on homes in rural, regional and remote areas. To this end, the committee has presented the opportunity for aged care providers to apply for exemptions from the state legislative requirement for consideration on a case-by-case basis. Such exemptions should only be granted where the facility can demonstrate that it can still provide a high level of quality care.’



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3

Other recommendations include a comprehensive system of enforcement of the state provision, improvements to the wider aged care regulatory framework, better support for and regulation of the aged care workforce and recognition of the wage disparity that exists between government and non-government providers for registered nurses. The recommendations also address the need for government support for improving the training and availability of registered nurses in rural and regional areas.

Ms Barham said, 'This inquiry and the suite of measures that have been recommended should provide a positive basis for greater improvement and more innovation in the delivery of quality aged care services in New South Wales.'

A list of the committee's recommendations is attached. The report is available on the committee's website – www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gpsc3

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For further information please contact the Committee Chair, Ms Jan Barham MLC, on (02) 9230 2603.