

**Submission
No 58**

**INQUIRY INTO REGISTERED NURSES IN NEW SOUTH
WALES NURSING HOMES**

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I am a GP who was a registered nurse previously. I have worked in nursing homes and as registered nurse and visited them as a GP. I have had relatives in nursing homes.

Before I comment on the terms of reference, I would like to point out that nursing homes are home to many vulnerable people. It is where some people will live out their final years. It is imperative that the care they receive is dignified. Staff have been over-burdened with paperwork which has reduced quality time spent with residents, when an official visiting system, with random inspections, would be more effective.

RNs working in the Aged Care sector have traditionally been underpaid compared with their hospital counterparts. This situation undervalues the needs of the elderly and should be addressed.

1. a. i) It would be unsafe to leave nursing homes without 24 hour registered nurse cover. Staff with lesser qualifications do not have the training to deal with medical or mental health emergencies and mishaps.

ii) The push to reduce registered nurse(RN) cover is an economic one, but is short-sighted. Transfers to hospital are more likely when staff are not qualified to assess or treat unwell residents, or to arrange timely review by a GP or other specialised service.

b. Distressing incidents and medical problems can occur at any hour, hence the need for 24 hour RN cover.

c. Without RNs, residents can be denied important medications. A chemist just this week told me a residential care facility inappropriately asked her to uncap a medication prior to delivery, as there were no RNs on site to do this. Medication management requires training and experience, at least to an RN level. RNs are in a position to not only administer medication but to monitor its use and question its appropriateness.

d. Assistants in nursing, in my experience, lack the training to appropriately assess residents for hospital transfer.

2. While minimum standards for assistants in nursing are required, this will not do away with the need for a professional, an RN, providing overall supervision and guidance. I have worked with some kind and hard-working assistants in nursing, but also some extremely ignorant people lacking in empathy and skill. A greater level of confidence exists when RNs are on staff- there is a lot less variation in skill and professionalism.

3. Nurse to resident ratios for people requiring high-level care should match those in the hospital system.