

Submission  
No 144

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

## Submission for having RNs in nursing homes

My family deliberately chose an Aged Care Facility for our mother because of the level of medical care of the staff. It is the nature of having to live in an Aged Care Facility that you need physical and medical care. Every resident in an Aged Care facility is in the facility as they need physical and medical care or they would not be there in the first place. A resident could be healthy but at risk of a fall, or at risk because of a medical condition like Parkinson's disease, dementia, or simply old age and unable to be responsible for their own health, taking medication correctly etc.

If you cannot be responsible for your own health and wellbeing that you need to live in an Aged Care Facility, then some of the staff in that facility need to be trained in health care, ie, a Registered Nurse (RN) at the minimum. A care worker in the facility is not the same as a health care worker.

Being unable to look after yourself is not just about being unable to prepare dinner, its about being able to responsible for your own health. Its about taking many medications on time and correctly, many times a day all while knowing which small white pill needs to be taken with food or ½ hour after food etc.

Already RNs and carers are reluctant to call a doctor out of hours (YES, doctors are unhappy at being called out of hours and certainly let the staff know this) so I can imagine carers would be reluctant to call a nurse out of hours.

EG: My mother blacked out in the bathroom, while the emergency button was activated quickly, the carers still needed to find the RN to get a diagnosis and medical help and investigate the issue. With no RN onsite, while my mother would have been made comfortable, her medical needs would have taken much longer.

Residents of an aged care facility all have different needs and those needs can appear any time of the day or night. An RN needs to be available 24/7 to be able to cover all the medical needs of a facility that can happen at any time.

Residents have the right to know what medication they are taking and RNs can tell them at the time its dispensed what it is, what its treating and any other issues.

With many residents needing many different medications and many times of the day, its imperative an RN is available to administer and deliver medications safely and correctly. While notes on the medication packs may give instructions, its more about what the medication is for that an RN is able to explain. A carer will not be able to explain the difference between a *Sinemet* at 9am and a *Cipramil* at 10am and why they need to be taken separately. Residents often ask from day to day "what is this one for" "this looks the same of the one I have already taken" etc. A carer can only say "its just what you have to take" an RN can medically explain to the satisfaction of the resident.

Only a trained RN can recognise symptoms as a whole and have an understanding as to where the symptoms can lead. While carers are excellent at the physical side of residents safety, I cannot agree they are fully capable of recognising if a resident needs medical care. An RN is necessary to diagnose early and prevent any escalation of symptoms which may lead to hospital admission.

For an ambulance to be called to a facility it should be for an emergency, not because there was no one medically trained to be able to diagnose and fix before it became an emergency.

Medical staff are mandatory at major events including concerts, sporting events even clubs eg: RSL Clubs when there are events on and also at railway stations. The patrons at these events would generally be considered healthy yet onsite medical care is mandatory. Why then remove medical care from a facility where by the nature of the facility the residents are considered a high medical risk?

I feel there should be a minimum level of RN supervision 24/7 in every facility to cover the medical needs of all residents. I also feel there should be a minimum level of carer to resident ratio (similar to childcare levels).

At present the standards do not mandate number of carers to residents (or so I was informed by my mothers facility when I asked) and that is a financial risk that facility managements are already using for money saving. Removing an RN will not raise the carer to resident ratio which will mean less care per resident and an added medical risk to the residents. At least one RN is mandatory in supervising the carers and answering medical questions and needs of both the residents and the carers.

Aged Care Facilities are just considered a business by their management. Where money can be saved, management will save it. By removing the need for an RN to be onsite 24/7 will save money but cost residents their medical safety, cost the government more in hospital costs and cost families their trust in the care of their elderly relatives and friends.