

**Submission
No 98**

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

Name: Mrs Rita Martin

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I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. As a Registered Nurse since 1984 I have considerable clinical experience, both in Australia and overseas. My mother lived with Dementia for many years, and was cared for by my father at home - probably for longer than he was able. She died from metastatic brain cancer - that had spread from a breast cancer primary. She could not articulate that she was in pain, or terrified, or nauseous. She was lucky that we were able to access excellent palliative care and she was blessed with a 'good' death.

There is a myth that people with dementia only require 'minding' - like baby sitting. They do not. By the time they are admitted to residential aged care facilities they may have co-morbidities. They cannot articulate that they have pain, or are terrified, or burning when they pass urine that is symptomatic of a urinary tract infection. People with Dementia need to have very skilled expert care from professionals, preferable with additional mental health qualifications. Just because you have dementia, it does not mean that you do not get many other co-morbidities of ageing. Its not either/or - dementia or arthritis, dementia or cancer. They can - and often do co-exist. But a person with dementia may not be able to communicate this. Confusion and distress are often much worse overnight in dementia patients - sometimes referred to as 'Sundowners' - where agitation and confusion escalate in the evenings and overnight. Staffing levels and skills mix in RACFs is patchy at best - and dangerous in many occasions. There is a myth - supported by some providers, that people in RACFs sleep all night so there is no requirement for too many staff, and certainly no need for RNs overnight. This is such a terrible un truth. I dare any member of this committee to spend 48 hours over any weekend in any RACF. Managers use the argument that there are not enough RNs available and they cant get staff. If Qantas could not get pilots to work for them - they would not be allowed to get the cabin crew to fly the planes. Near enough is not good enough. There is a lot of money to be made in aged care services. This is a huge, and growing market. The goose that laid the golden egg. There must be improvements in the mandated levels of staffing and kills mix. We cannot and must not leave this to market forces. Please support the requirement for a minimum of RN 24/7 and recommend this system has a thorough overhaul.