

**Submission  
No 44**

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

**Organisation:** Leichhardt Municipal Council

**Date received:** 17/07/2015

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17 July 2015

The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

**SUBJECT: LEICHHARDT COUNCIL SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO REGISTERED NURSES IN NSW NURSING HOMES**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to staffing in aged care facilities in NSW. Leichhardt Council welcomes the opportunity to participate in this inquiry and recognises the essential role that registered nurses and aged care providers play in protecting and caring for one of the most vulnerable sections of our community, the elderly.

At its Ordinary meeting of the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015 Council unanimously resolved as follows:

*That Council:*

- 1. Acknowledges that all residents in nursing homes should be provided with quality care led by registered nurses;*
- 2. Notes with concern the potential risk to residents of nursing homes across the Leichhardt LGA with the removal of the requirement to have a registered nurse on duty at all times;*
- 3. Supports the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association campaign RN 24/7 to ensure permanent legislation is in place requiring a registered nurse on at all times and the appointment of a director of nursing in all NSW nursing homes, as a minimum;*
- 4. Writes to the NSW Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner MP and Shadow Minister for Health, Walt Secord MLC conveying this resolution and;*
- 5. Disseminates this information to relevant Leichhardt LGA community and aged care groups.*
- 6. Brings this issue to the attention of the Federal Member for Sydney and the relevant Commonwealth Minister.*

With respect to the above resolution please find attached Leichhardt Council's submission to the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Head  
**General Manager**



## LEICHHARDT COUNCIL- SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO REGISTERED NURSES IN NSW NURSING HOMES

### Background

#### Context

Leichhardt Council has six nursing homes within its local government area (LGA) that accommodates 513 vulnerable older residents. Over the last ten years the LGA population has steadily become older, with both the proportion of residents aged over 60 years and the LGA's median age increasing.

Leichhardt Council recognises that our population is ageing. There is an overall trend towards an increasing percentage of older citizens, consistent with broader population projections (for NSW and Australia). In the period 2016 – 2036, it is estimated that the number of people aged 65 and over in Leichhardt will double from 7319 to 14,224 (12.4% to 21.3% of the population).

### Strategic Direction

The ageing population has implications for how we design our communities, deliver our services, plan our transport and infrastructure and develop our workforces. In this respect Council has developed a four year service delivery plan, known as the Healthy Ageing Plan. This plan has in its first year an allocation of \$40,000 to deliver a range of key initiatives to support healthy ageing within the community. These initiatives have been developed with wide community input and support, particularly from our Seniors Council committee, and local health care service providers.

The Leichhardt Healthy Ageing Plan has adopted the principles contained in the NSW Ageing Strategy.

1. **Local decision-making and partnerships** – local decision-making is likely to generate the best responses to ageing in communities, particularly when it involves those people most affected by these decisions.
2. **Older people's rights and autonomy** – older people know what is best for their own lives and have the right to make decisions on their own behalf.
3. **Personal responsibility** – older people should be encouraged and supported to take personal responsibility for their own ageing which will contribute to their long-term wellbeing and independence.
4. **High quality, timely and equitable services** – older people deserve high quality services when they need them. Services should be focused on customers and help people be as independent as possible.
5. **Engagement and accountability** – the community should be actively involved in ageing issues and (local) government should be accountable for delivering its work.

The key principle of **High quality, timely and equitable services** (*Source: NSW Ageing Strategy 2012*), directly relates to nursing models of care led by registered nurses in nursing homes. Registered nurses provide skilled, expert clinical care to residents of NSW nursing homes with complex, high level needs. This includes recognising, assessing and managing changes in condition, providing pain relief and palliation, minimising discomfort or distress and preventing unnecessary hospital admissions.

### Key Concerns

Leichhardt Council supports the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association recommendations that NSW legislation should continue to retain safeguards in place to protect our older people.



Council supports the Association's suggestions that the Public Health Act 2010 (NSW) terminology be amended to extend the definition of a nursing home to cover all facilities where people are living who have been assessed, and are funded as having high care and complex health needs requiring the services of a Registered Nurse.

Council is concerned about the recent changes to the Aged Care Act 1997 that bring great risk for our community, changes which will:

- Place a heavily burden our local health system as the population ages.
- Result in an increase in hospital admissions, placing additional and unnecessary pressure on the local health system, particularly already stretched Emergency Departments and the NSW Ambulance Service and NSW Health in-reach services such as aged health care, palliative care and community nursing services.
- Adversely impact on the care of frail elderly residents *(when admitted to hospital, older people stay longer and fare worse than other groups. It is much more effective to provide care in the nursing homes, with in-reach support when needed and to minimize admissions via emergency departments. Such support also provides a greater level of comfort for the elderly and their families).*
- Potentially remove the role and importance of aged care assessment teams *(aged care assessment teams are fundamental to the assessment of the level of care elderly residents require to be supported in place at their private residence and more importantly deserve while living in aged care facilities).*
- Adversely impact on confidence within the community of quality care in aged care provision *(families of the elderly need to be secure in knowing that their loved ones are being given the best quality care that they deserve regardless of their age. In this respect it is essential that the assessment framework is maintained and that qualified registered nurses continue to deliver such care. Registered nurses must be maintained and on duty at all times in NSW nursing homes).*

### **Support for Nurses**

Leichhardt Council supports NSW legislation continuing to retain safeguards in place to protect our older people. It is submitted that the *Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)* terminology should be amended to extend the definition of a nursing home to cover all facilities where people are living who have been assessed, and are funded as having high care complex health needs requiring the services of a registered nurse.

It is also important to note the significant impact dementia has on Australian communities and the key services that nursing homes provide in supporting this illness. Elderly residents are by nature at the highest demographic risk of developing age-related illnesses such as dementia, Australia's second leading cause of death. The highest quality of care and comfort is required and registered nurses are the best qualified profession to plan, lead and support the delivery of this care.

Leichhardt Council requests that legislative safeguards are maintained into the future and that permanent NSW legislation is enacted which acknowledges and supports registered nurses remaining on duty in nursing homes delivering specialised aged health care.

The elderly require respect, dignity and the quality of care which can only be afforded by professional services. In this respect Council strongly advocates the role of the government in protecting and safeguarding the most vulnerable in our community. Quality aged health care can only be achieved by ensuring that the services of registered nurses remain essential in NSW nursing homes.