



A snapshot of residential aged care

Older Australians who require care in nursing homes deserve the best quality care. This can only be achieved by providing a skilled and robust nursing workforce and adequate funding. The Australian Government is ultimately responsible to ensure that funding is available and properly accounted for, and that funds are directed to the provision of quality care.

More and more, older Australians are remaining in their own homes for longer, and are entering nursing homes only when their care needs are too complex to be managed in the community. That complexity of care means that more than ever, we need qualified nursing staff whose skills are valued, whose professionalism is acknowledged and who feel they can care for their residents properly.

There are three levels of care staff working in aged care: registered nurses, enrolled nurses and personal carers (PCs)*. Personal carers now constitute the majority of the aged care nursing workforce and are unlicensed and unregulated. They are not bound by the same professional frameworks as enrolled and registered nurses. Their skills are highly valued by care teams, and the ANF believes it is now time to bring them into the realm of the professional boundaries that guide and protect licensed nurses and those they care for.

Residential Aged Care Nursing Workforce Trends

Between 2003 and 2007 there has been an increase of 3.7% in the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) direct care staff employed in

nursing homes. However, registered nurse (FTE) employment decreased by almost 20% during the same period. (Martin and King, 2008) In 2010 the number of residential aged care places increased by 20.5% and under the new ACFI funding tool 71.3% of residents were assessed as high care (AIHW 2011).

The National Institute of Labour Studies (NILS) 2008 Report *Who Cares For Older Australians?* indicates there is a significant restructuring of nursing staff in nursing homes. There has been an overall increase in nursing care delivered by staff other than registered and enrolled nurses.

"Overall, these figures suggest a significant reorganisation of care in residential aged care homes so that more care is provided by PCs and less by nurses. Moreover, a greater proportion of new hires continue to be PCs, suggesting that the trend towards increased use of PCs will continue". (Martin and King)

This shift in workforce structure within aged care emphasises the importance of maintaining the delivery of high quality and safe nursing care in the sector. The Australian population is ageing and the ANF asserts that we need to ensure that registered and enrolled nurses are employed in aged care to meet this increased demand.

* The term PCs includes personal carers, assistants in nursing and other unlicensed workers (however titled) working in aged care.

Residential Aged Care: Distribution of direct care workforce (FTE) by occupation 2003 and 2007

Occupation	2003 Private and Public			2007 Private and Public			% change in FTE staffing levels	
	Distribution of direct care workforce	% of direct care workforce	Private Only	Distribution of direct care workforce	% of direct care workforce	Private Only	Private and Public	Private Only
Registered Nurse	16,265	21.4%	14,720	13,247	16.8%	12,107	18.6% decrease	17.8% decrease
Enrolled Nurse	10,945	14.4%	9,905	9,856	12.5%	9,009	10.0% decrease	9.0% decrease
Personal Carer	42,943	56.5%	38,864	50,542	64.1%	46,196	18.9% increase	4.8% increase
Allied Health	5,776	7.6%	5,776	5,204	6.6%	4,757	9.9% increase	0.5% decrease
Total	76,006		(less 9.5% public - 7,221 = 68,785)	78,849		(less 8.6% public - 6,781 = 72,068)	3.7% increase	4.8% increase

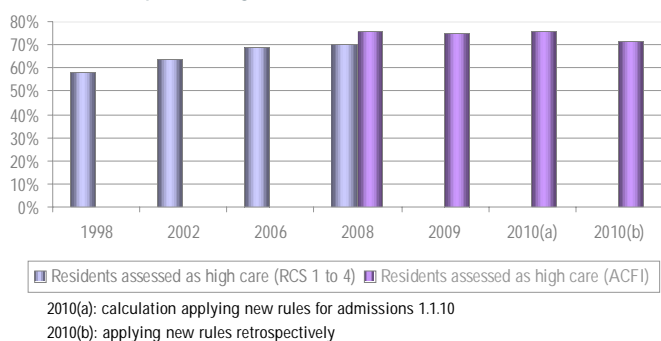
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Resident characteristics

- 166,370 residents in mainstream residential aged care services at 30 June 2010.
- Proportion of residents aged 80 years and over:

1998-1999	64.1%
2005-2006	70.9%
2007-2008	75.8%
2008-2009	76.2%
2009-2010	76.5%
- Over half of all residents were aged 85 years and over.

Resident dependency levels



Number of aged care services

As at June 2010 there were 2,772 residential aged care services providing 179,749 resident places.

Number of residential aged care places

30 June 1995	134,810
30 June 2005	161,765
30 June 2008	172,657
30 June 2009	175,225
30 June 2010	179,749

Ratio of residential aged care places per 1000 persons aged 70 years and over

30 June 2005	86.4
30 June 2006	87.2
30 June 2008	87.7
30 June 2009	87.0
30 June 2010	86.8

Average number of places per facility

1998	46.4
2006	60.0
2008	61.0
2009	63.0
2010	64.8

Ownership of residential aged care places

Private for profit providers	29.1%
Private not for profit providers	32.7%
Religious providers	27.3%
State/Territory/local government	10.9%

Registered and enrolled nurses in residential aged care

- The number of registered and enrolled full-time positions in residential aged care has dropped by up to 20% since 2003. Between 2003 and 2010 the number of residential aged care places has increased by 20.5% and dependency levels of residents have increased from 64.4% assessed as high care in 2003, to 71.3% in 2010.
- The decline in the number of registered nurses is also highlighted in AIHW Nursing Labour Force reports, noting the substantial skill loss which places further pressure on the residential aged care sector.

Wages gap

- Full time residential aged care nurses now earn, on average, up to \$340 per week less than their colleagues in other sectors resulting in increasing difficulties attracting and retaining adequate numbers of appropriately trained nursing staff.

Sources

AIHW 2000 Residential Aged Care Facilities in Australia 1998-99: A Statistical Overview.
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Report on Government Services 2011

