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**TIME TO REWARD OUR AGED CARE WORKFORCE WITH  
 APPROPRIATE TRAINING AND RESOURCES**

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, today thanked all the hardworking, dedicated, and passionate aged care staff caring for Australia’s elderly this Christmas.

“While many of us are able to take leave and spend time with our families at this time of year, the aged care workforce ensures that older people receive the care they need,” Dr Bartone, a GP who visits patients in residential aged care facilities, said.

“Caring for older people is a rewarding experience, but can be challenging when older people have complex medical conditions.

“This is especially true when facilities do not have the appropriate staff available to care for the medical needs of older people.

“There has been a decline in the proportion of registered and enrolled nurses in residential aged care facilities that does not reflect the increasing need for medical care as a result of an ageing population.

“There have been countless stories of inadequate quality care in aged care settings in the media lately, but most staff do their best with the limited resources and training available to them.

“The aged care sector needs a mandatory minimum staff-to-resident ratio that reflects the level of care needs, and ensures 24-hour registered nurse availability.

“Adequate staffing ratios alone might not ensure quality, but inadequate staffing certainly prevents it.

“Aged care facilities also need appropriate funding and resourcing from governments to ensure that quality care for the elderly remains a right, not an optional extra.

“Our elderly deserve, and should receive, the respect of appropriate care at a vulnerable time in their lives.”

The aged care workforce includes nurses, personal care assistants, allied health professionals, informal carers, and doctors. It also includes roles in care management, administration, spiritual and pastoral care, and ancillary care.

The AMA’s submission to the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport *Inquiry into the Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018* is at <https://ama.com.au/submission/ama-submission-standing-committee-health-aged-care-and-sport-%E2%80%93-inquiry-aged-care>

The AMA’s *Position Statement on Resourcing Aged Care* is at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/aged-care-resourcing-2018>

**Background**

- In 2017, 15 per cent (3.8 million) Australians were aged 65 and over. This is expected to grow to 22 per cent (8.8 million) by 2057.
- Of permanent residents in aged care facilities in June 2017:

- One-third had high care needs in every ACFI domain (i.e. complex health care, behaviour, and activities of daily living)
- 85 per cent had at least one mental or behavioural condition
- 47 per cent had depression
- 52 per cent had dementia
- At September 30 2018, there were 126,732 people waiting for an appropriate home care package, the majority of whom have high care needs.
- Of the estimated 235,000 aged care workers in 2016, about 70 per cent are personal care assistants, 15 per cent are registered nurses, and 10 per cent are enrolled nurses.
- Between 2003 and 2016, registered and enrolled nurses as a proportion of the full-time equivalent residential aged care work force has decreased dramatically – from 21.4 per cent to 14.9 per cent for RNs, and from 14.4 per cent to 9.3 per cent for ENs.

*Sources: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the Department of Health.*

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