



*His Excellency General the
Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove
AK MC (Retd), Governor-General of
the Commonwealth of Australia,
Patron*

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Selection Committee
The Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Inquiry into the Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018

Palliative Care Australia (PCA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the above Private Members Bill introduced into Parliament by Rebekha Sharkie, MP and referred to your Committee for further inquiry.

PCA is the national peak body for palliative care in Australia, providing leadership on palliative care policy and community engagement. Working closely with consumers, its Member Organisations and the palliative care and broader health workforce, PCA aims to improve the quality of life and death for people with a life-limiting illness, their families and carers.

The availability of appropriate staff ratios and skills mix within residential aged care is an issue of high importance to PCA given 35% of all Australians who die do so in residential aged care, equating to approximately 60,000 people each year. Palliative care should be seen as core business for aged care, and residents should be supported to have a high quality of life right to the end of life.

PCA supports the intention of this Private Members Bill to increase transparency and communication between aged care providers and the general public regarding staffing levels to assist in informed decision making, noting that the Bill does not mandate particular staffing or skill mix ratios. However, PCA highlights that there is no reference to the provision of quality checks on the information provided, nor on the ramifications on providers should information have been falsified.

A key concern of PCA is the quality and availability of after-hours care including weekend care for residents. A blunt reporting instrument of numbers of staff on any given day may reflect the period of the day where most staff are working but not capture the numbers of staff in the facility after core business hours including on weekends. It would be beneficial to the community to have the ratio information for a 24-hour period reflecting both core business hours and the after-hours period including weekends. The outcome PCA seeks is to ensure that a predictable standard of care is provided.

PCA is supportive of the breakdown across the range of staff in residential aged care that is included in the draft Bill, as while it is important to have a minimum staff to resident ratio, the skill mix is also a key consideration. Staff working in residential aged care needs to be suitably trained and equipped to work with residents who have palliative care needs and their families. This includes the ability to recognise deterioration, the need for pain and other symptom management, the signs of impending death and the response to family and carer grief and bereavement issues.

Please do not hesitate in contacting Kelly Gourlay, National Policy Advisor, if you would like to discuss these issues further at kelly@palliativecare.org.au or 02 6232 0700.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Liz Callaghan', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Liz Callaghan
Chief Executive Officer
Palliative Care Australia