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Australian College of Nursing (ACN) concerned with plans to remove the legal requirement for a registered nurse (RN) to be on site and available at all times in all nursing homes

In light of NSW Health's response to the 2015 Parliament of NSW Inquiry into Registered nurses in NSW nursing homes, handed down by the Hon. Jillian Skinner, NSW Health Minister, Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is concerned with plans to remove the legal requirement for a registered nurse (RN) to be on site and available at all times in all nursing homes.

RNs are crucial to the delivery of safe, high quality care to residents and those requiring respite in residential aged care facilities throughout Australia.

RNs assess, plan and implement nursing care. They provide leadership by directing, supporting and supervising the care provided by enrolled nurses (EN), assistants in nursing (AIN) and unregulated care workers (however titled).

The Australian College of Nursing is of the view that to promote a safe and high quality service for all care recipients in aged care facilities an RN should be on site, available and accessible in all settings where clinical care is delivered.

The Australian College of Nursing in its submission into the Inquiry into registered nurses in NSW nursing homes argued for 24/7 RN care. Furthermore, Australian College of Nursing reiterated this in its submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce ([Link](#)).

The lack of formalised educational and competency requirements for the unregulated aged care workforce puts the protection of frail aged care residents at risk. Australian College of Nursing supports the *National Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers* released by the COAG Health Council in April 2015, however RN's are well placed to respond to critical incidents and manage the continuity of care that unregulated care workers (however titled) are not equipped to deal with as this extends beyond their scope of training and practice.

Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward, CEO of the Australian College of Nursing says she would like the "Hon. Sussan Ley, Federal Health Minister, to whom this recommendation was referred to by the Hon. Jillian Skinner, to consider an appropriate skill mix of regulated workers which includes having an RN on duty, available and accessible at all times in nursing homes".

It is well documented that the clinical complexity of residents entering aged care facilities is increasing, with the care requirements of residents often complicated by multiple comorbidities, poly-pharmacy, geriatric syndromes and cognitive impairment. To ensure the provision of quality care for this vulnerable population requires the highest level of clinical governance, and care coordination by a RN and professionally licensed workforce.



Gerontology nursing is a rewarding career opportunity for nurses and their role will become more important to Australia as the population grows older. Nurses working within the field must be supported by an adequately staffed and trained workforce to deliver the skills required to support the elderly population and their acute and palliative care needs and to support the increasing clinical complexity and dynamic nature of the work.

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