

# AGED CARE RATIOS - THE MOST IMPORTANT REFORM



Australian  
Nursing &  
Midwifery  
Federation

## Why do we need Aged Care Ratios<sup>1</sup>?

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety found that Australia's aged care sector is widely understaffed. As a result, many vulnerable residents are neglected and do not receive the care they need or deserve. While there are examples of good aged care providers and many staff, who provide excellent care despite the woeful conditions they work in, the sector has systemically failed older Australians and the wider community who deserve access to safe, quality care.

The Royal Commission found this is largely because there is no national minimum staffing standard so, on average, Australian nursing home residents **only receive 180 minutes (3 hours)** of care per day including only 36 minutes from registered nurses, well below what's needed to ensure safe, quality care for every older Australian.

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## What's needed for safe, quality care?

Research shows that to guarantee the delivery of safe, quality care, an average of **258 minutes (4.3 hours)** of care per day is needed for each nursing home resident. This must include: 77 minutes from registered nurses, 52 minutes from enrolled nurses, and 129 minutes from personal care workers.

The Royal Commission recommended that the Australian Government legislate a minimum staffing standard for nursing homes, commencing from 1 July 2022, requiring at least 200 minutes (3.3 hours) of care per resident per day with 40 minutes from a registered nurse (RN), with a subsequent increase to 215 minutes (3.6 hours) of care per resident per day, with 44 minutes from a RN.

The ANMF agrees with the Royal Commission's recommendation for a national minimum staffing standard, mandated by law. The ANMF also agrees with the standard's requirement to commence from **1 July 2022, at 200 minutes (3.3 hours)** of care per day, with an uplift to **215 minutes (3.6 hours)** of care per day as the **first two stages of a five year implementation plan** to achieve the minimum staffing level which will guarantee safe, quality care for every nursing home resident, **258 minutes (4.3 hours)** of care per day.

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## What are the benefits of aged care ratios?

1. Safe, quality care for **every older Australian** living in a nursing home.
2. A positive impact on the overworked aged care workforce by ensuring safe workloads, and the best way to attract and keep staff in the sector.
3. A positive impact on the Australian economy.

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## How do we get there?

1. We need commitment from all political parties to **legislate aged care ratios** (minimum staffing levels and hours of care for all nursing home residents) as recommended by the Royal Commission and guarantee safe care for older Australians.
2. We need a **phased implementation plan** to develop the skills and workforce required to meet the minimum staffing standard and care hours required for safe care.

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<sup>1</sup> Ratios = minimum staffing levels (minutes/hours of care/day/resident) and skills mix (% of care minutes/hours provided by RN/EN/PCW)

# HOW AUSTRALIA CAN IMPLEMENT SAFE STAFFING AND PROTECT VULNERABLE RESIDENTS<sup>2</sup>

## STAGE 1. 1 JULY 2022 – 31 DECEMBER 2022

- Each nursing home must ensure an average of **200 minutes (3.3 hours)** of nursing and personal care per resident including 60 minutes of care from registered nurses, 40 minutes from enrolled nurses, and 100 minutes from personal care workers
- Nursing homes must provide 24-hour registered nurse cover on site (**minimum 1 RN per shift**).

## STAGE 2. 1 JANUARY 2023 – 30 JUNE 2023

- Each nursing home must ensure an average of **215 minutes (3.6 hours)** of nursing and personal care per resident including 64 minutes of care from registered nurses, 42 minutes from enrolled nurses, and 108 minutes from personal care workers
- Nursing homes must provide 24-hour registered nurse cover on site (**minimum 1 RN per shift**).

## STAGE 3. 1 JULY 2023 – 30 JUNE 2024

- Each nursing home must ensure an average of **225 minutes (3.75 hours)** of nursing and personal care per day per resident including 68 minutes of care from registered nurses, 45 minutes from enrolled nurses, and 112 minutes from personal care workers.
- Nursing homes must provide 24-hour registered nurse cover on site (minimum 1 registered per 30 residents on day shift and 1 registered nurse for other shifts).

## STAGE 4. 1 JULY 2024 – 30 JUNE 2025

- Each nursing home must ensure an average of **240 minutes (4 hours)** of nursing and personal care per day per resident including 72 minutes of care from registered nurses, 48 minutes from enrolled nurses, and 120 minutes from personal care workers.
- Nursing homes must provide 24-hour registered nurse cover on site (minimum 1 registered nurse per 30 residents on day and evening shift and 1 registered nurse on night shift).

## STAGE 5. 1 JULY 2025 – 30 JUNE 2026

- Each nursing home must ensure an average of **258 minutes (4.3 hours)** of nursing and personal care per day per resident including 77 minutes of care from registered nurses, 52 minutes from enrolled nurses, and 129 minutes from personal care workers.
- Nursing homes must provide 24-hour registered nurse cover on site (minimum 1 registered nurse per 15 residents on day shift, 1 registered nurse per 30 residents evening shift and 1 registered nurse per 30 residents on night shift).

*The staffing levels and skills mixes above are calculated across the facility, not by individual units or wings. This gives nursing homes the flexibility needed to respond to varying care needs of the residents. Toward the end of the implementation period, reassessment should occur to ensure that any future adjustments to minimum standards for nursing home staffing levels and skills mix will continue to provide safe, quality care for residents.*

<sup>2</sup> Exemptions to assist facilities – some rural and remote facilities may find it difficult to implement full staffing requirements in line with the proposed timetable. Where a facility advertises positions for qualified staff and cannot fill them an exemption may be granted annually, provided evidence of efforts to fill positions is reported.