



MEDIA RELEASE

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Pay parity for aged care nurses urgent

At today's parliamentary Health Select Committee, the New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) called on government to urgently fund pay parity for registered nurses in the sector with their counterparts in public hospitals.

Presenting a petition of 15,000 signatures backing 'Fair Pay for Aged Care Nurses', Simon Wallace, Chief Executive of the NZACA said the Government's health reforms had failed to address the issue of pay parity for the healthcare workforce, which was raised in the Health and Disability System Review.

"While we are pleased to see aged care recognised in the Government's reforms as a core part of the primary and community care system, the critical issue of pay disparity has been ignored," says Mr Wallace.

"The fact is that aged care is a nursing-led sector, a mainstream part of the healthcare system providing 40,000 beds that protect the District Health Boards' 13,000 beds from being overwhelmed, as well as saving the system \$5.5 billion annually.

"Yet due to years of systemic underfunding, our registered nurses earn on average \$10,000 a year less than those working for District Health Boards (DHBs). As a result, the sector faces ongoing struggles to attract and retain nurses. Additionally, this underfunding undervalues not only the highly specialised work aged care nurses do, but the older people they care for," says Mr Wallace.

"Now, chronic nursing shortages are being exacerbated by the blockages in vital supply of international nurses who make up around 50% of the 5,000 nurses working in our rest homes around New Zealand.

“It is time for the Government to support the sector by funding pay parity for our nurses. At a cost of around \$85 million a year, this is a mere fraction of the \$5.5 billion our sector saves DHBs annually.”

Mr Wallace says the sector also wants to work with the Government on a broader range of solutions to the nursing workforce shortages, including designing and delivering the right training pathways to support and advance our aged care nursing workforce.

“But first, the Government must value aged care nurses and fund the sector to pay them what they are worth in parity with their peers in public hospitals”.

“This needs to happen now, ensuring a common pool of nurses in the healthcare system as we transition from DHBs into the future model.”

ENDS

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