



MEDIA RELEASE

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Aged care sector advocated for two-year residency for nurses tied to employer

The New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) is disappointed that Immigration NZ has not put a requirement for Internationally Qualified Nurses (IQNs) granted a two-year Work-to-Residence pathway to be tied to one aged residential care employer.

NZACA Chief Executive Simon Wallace says there has been some ambiguity in media reports about the place of registered nurses on the Green Lists and the Association's position since the immigration policy changes were announced last week by Immigration Minister Kris Faafoi.

"The matter had also been confused by the Ministers of Immigration and Health making comments on radio at the time of the announcement that indicated nurses would indeed be bonded to the aged care sector for two years.

"However, on seeking clarification, we found that was not the case. I want to make it clear that the NZACA advocated for nurses to be on a two-year visa and, most importantly, that this two-year period be tied to one aged residential care employer.

"The reason for this is that we have a severe workforce crisis in the sector and need to keep nurses working in aged care. With turnover of aged care nurses at an all-time high of 48 percent over the year to December 2021, securing nurses for this two-year period would have been extremely helpful for our sector's staffing woes."

Mr Wallace says the NZACA had been in discussions with Immigration NZ (INZ) officials since the announcement of what was then the immigration 'reset' in mid-2021, to provide feedback on the needs of the sector.

"However, we were never consulted on whether Aged Care or Nursing should be included on the Green Lists, rather our focus was on negotiating an aged residential care-specific Immigration Sector Agreement.

"We last met with INZ at the end of January and since then our requests to meet to have further input were declined as they awaited decisions from Cabinet. We only learned of these on Wednesday last week at the same time as they were announced."

Mr Wallace says the NZACA has never supported a straight-to-residence visa as it puts no requirement or incentive for nurses to remain in aged care and they can depart after a short period, for more money in District Health Boards or abroad.

“We do welcome the fact that aged care has been lined up for an Immigration Sector Agreement to cover our 20,000 plus caregiver workforce, something we have been lobbying on since 2020.

“However, immigration aside, at the heart of the issue here is the pay disparity between registered nurses working in aged care and those working in DHBs. If our nurses were paid in parity with their DHB counterparts there wouldn't be a need to take these measures to keep them in the sector.

“Pay Parity remains the highest priority for the Association, and we hope to see government step up on the Budget.”

ENDS

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