

AGED CARE

Supporting older Australians to access high quality aged care

There is urgent need for a comprehensive approach to aged care reform to ensure that older Australians have top quality choice and control in their lives and are confident they can access the care they need.

The Greens will ensure older Australians have safe, affordable aged care, and are able to choose whether to stay at home or to move to residential care.

The Greens will also improve quality of care through increased levels of care, staffing ratios and ensure that we have the aged care workforce of the future and improved staffing levels, providing better training and increasing pay.



THE GREENS WILL:

- Guarantee a **human rights based approach to aged care**
- Provide funding for **an additional 50,000 level 3 and 4 Home Care Packages** over three years at a cost of \$5.491 billion
- Commit an initial investment of \$3 billion to:
 - **Increase hours of care provided to each resident in residential aged care** to four hours and eighteen minutes per day
 - **Require staff-to-resident ratios that ensure an adequate level of care** including a minimum of one registered nurse rostered 24/7
 - **Increase pay** for aged care workers by 15%
- **End the use of chemical and physical restraints in aged care facilities**
- **Review the Aged Care Funding Instrument**



A HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

The Greens will guarantee a human rights based approach to aged care. Older Australians have a right to freedom from discrimination, freedom from violence, a right to social security, a right to work and a right to health.

We want to enable a paradigm shift towards seeing older people as rights holders and active contributors to society.

The regulatory framework underpinning aged care must be based on the human rights of older Australians, and acknowledge the interdependence and interconnectedness of those rights.

There is currently no binding international instrument that protects the rights of older persons. The Greens support a United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

At a local level, we support the urgent development and implementation of a single Charter of Rights in Aged Care.

MORE HOME CARE PACKAGES

The Government currently provides Home Care Packages for older people who need support to live at home. These packages range from Level 1 to Level 4 depending on the type of support people need. While we welcome the announcement of new Home Care Packages, we know this only meets a fraction of the demand.

Long wait times mean that people aren't getting the care they need. They discourage people from applying for packages and push people into residential care before they are ready.

The Greens want a significant increase in the number of Home Care Packages to start to meet this demand and ensure older Australians can continue to live at home.

The Greens will:

- Provide funding for an additional 50,000 Level 3 and 4 Home Care Packages over three years at a cost of \$5.491 billion.

INCREASED HOURS OF CARE PROVIDED TO EACH RESIDENT

Older Australians have increasingly complex aged care needs. We believe that aged care must add to the quality of someone's life and understand that aged care is health care. It should be person-centered and meet a person's clinical, cognitive, functional, spiritual and cultural needs.

We know that aged care residents are not receiving sufficient hours of care due to chronic under-staffing and underfunding. According to a recent study, the amount of care required to prevent premature deaths and to provide a safe environment for residents is 4 hours and 18 minutes per day¹. However, the national average is approximately 2 hours and 50 minutes per resident per day.

The Greens will:

- Commit an initial investment of \$3 billion over the forward estimates to increase the number of hours of care to each resident to 4 hours and 18 minutes per day by adopting staffing ratios and ensuring the correct skills mix of staff.

¹ Willis, E et al., 2016, 'National Aged Care Staffing and Skills Mix Project Report 2016', Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, p9.



REQUIRE STAFF-TO-RESIDENT RATIOS

Currently there is no requirement for minimum staff-to-resident ratios in aged care. Over the past 13 years, there has been a 400% increase in preventable deaths of older Australians in aged care².

Research shows there is a relationship between the quality and quantity of staff, and clinical outcomes for aged care residents. Staffing ratios can improve the quality of care delivered, reduce unsafe work practices and lead to better outcomes for residents³.

The Greens support the requirement for staffing ratios in residential aged care facilities, while recognising that ratios will need to be determined according to the needs of the residents in each facility to achieve an ideal skills mix.

We also support having a minimum of one registered nurse rostered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in all aged care facilities.

2 Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union, 2019, 'Ratios for Aged Care', https://www.qnmu.org.au/RatiosForAgedCare/About_the_campaign/RatiosForAgedCare/About_the_campaign/About.aspx?hkey=4ed9c49b-8c9b-42b6-9e6e-415ac36bfbc6

3 Senate Inquiry, 2017, 'Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce', pp57-58.

PROVIDE BETTER CONDITIONS FOR AGED CARE STAFF

Aged care staff are underpaid, under-trained and overworked. Many are working in facilities experiencing chronic under-staffing. In some cases, this is leading to people not receiving the most basic care.

The Greens will:

- Legislate for improved staffing levels, training and better pay to provide more and better trained staff; and
- Increase pay for aged care workers by 15%.

END THE USE OF CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS

In aged care facilities, some residents are being physically restrained or prescribed psychotropic medications to manage behavioural issues. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recently highlighted evidence of the misuse and overuse of chemical and physical restraints in aged care facilities.

There is a growing body of evidence of ways to reduce the use of restraints in aged care facilities. For example, we know that the way facilities are designed can help minimise the behavioural and psychiatric symptoms of dementia⁴.

Over the short to medium term, the Greens support mandatory reporting of the use of chemical and physical restraints in all aged care facilities, with a plan to end the use of restraints.

The Greens will:

- Introduce mandatory reporting on the use of chemical and physical restraints in aged care facilities, with a plan to end the use of restraints.

4 Senate Inquiry, 2014, 'Care and management of young and older Australians living with dementia and behavioural and psychiatric symptoms of dementia', pp48-49.

REVIEW OF THE AGED CARE FUNDING INSTRUMENT

The Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) measures the level of care each resident needs, and informs the allocation of Government subsidies to residential aged care providers.

It is widely acknowledged that ACFI no longer reflects the true cost of aged care, especially following the Coalition's cuts and freezes to indexation⁵.

This is having an impact on the quality of care, the financial viability of aged care providers and their ability to increase staffing levels.

The Greens will:

- Support a full and independent review of ACFI, alongside a true cost of care study.

IMPROVING AGED CARE

There is an ongoing need to improve the quality of aged care. More than 1.3 million people access or use some form of aged care in Australia.

We want to continue to support a system based on person-centered care that provides older Australians with quality and choice.

Improving aged care means addressing the high administrative fees providers are charging for aged care home care services.

The Greens will:

- Establish a cap on the percentage of the funding given to service providers that can be used for administration rather than direct resident care.

Palliative care improves the quality of life of patients and their families who are going through the end stages of life.

The Greens believe all Australians have a right to high quality palliative care that is person and family centered. We want an accessible, flexible and responsive palliative care system that includes the development of culturally safe palliative care services.

Another way we can improve aged care services is by getting a better picture of preventable deaths in residential aged care facilities.

Mortality audits provide an indicator of the quality of care residents receive and help us to understand the cause of death. We want to see improved practices around mortality audits in aged care to ensure preventable deaths are avoided.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and First Nations peoples need culturally appropriate aged care services.

The Greens want aged care facilities to deliver culturally appropriate services tailored to the diverse needs of their residents, for example by hiring bilingual staff.

⁵ Leading Age Services Australia, 2019, 'LASA 2019-20 Pre-Budget Submission', p8.