

Aged & Community Care Providers Association
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27 October 2023

Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP
Chair

Joint Standing Committee on Migration – Migration, Pathway to Nation Building Inquiry
PO Box 6021, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
migration@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Vamvakinou

RE: Response to Questions on Notice from public hearing of 27 September 2023 and the appearance by Tom Symondson, CEO, Aged and Community Care Providers Association (ACCPA)

I write to you on behalf of Mr Tom Symondson, CEO of ACCPA. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration - Migration, Pathway to Nation Building Inquiry and contribute to the design of a migration system for Australia's future as well as the role of permanent migration in nation building.

As identified at the hearing, we have engaged with our members and examined Australia's migration system to assess whether it is working effectively in support of our nation's aged care system. ACCPA emphasises the need for high quality care of older people in Australia, who deserve a range of options from the Government for addressing the workforce crisis gripping aged care in this nation - including an effective and targeted migration system and government support for 'wrap-around' services for aged care workers across Australia.

Please find below responses to the questions taken on notice by Mr Tom Symondson at the public hearing on 27 September 2023. We also include the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. Designing an effective and targeted migration system for aged care
2. Wrap-around supports for migration workers and their families.

1. Designing an effective and targeted migration system for aged care

Research by the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) found there would be a shortfall of at least 110,000 direct-care workers by 2030 and in a recent update on the aged care sector they noted that 'not enough has been done to fix this'.¹

The aged care sector's reliance on migration as a workforce solution is well-known. Migrant workers are a key characteristic of the aged care sector with around 30 per cent of the workforce comprised of migrants.

¹ Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA), [Duty of care: Aged-care sector running on empty](#), October 2023, p.5

We welcomed the initiative of the Pacific Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme and its application to the aged care sector, but note this scheme alone cannot address workforce supply needs in Australia due to the scale required to meet future demand for workers.

ACCPA members report varying experiences with the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement (ACILA) since its announcement in May 2023. As the only tripartite industry labour agreement in Australia, it is imperative that identified issues are addressed in a timely manner through a rolling cycle of monitoring, review, and policy design. It is also critical that this process actively involve industry stakeholders and aged care providers.

A significant and pressing gap in the current migration system is the lack of a targeted solution for increasing our supply of registered nurses. This comes at a time when legislation has mandated the increased use of registered nurses in aged care, during a known shortage of in Australia's aged care sector² - compounded by global competition for skilled labour in the health sector.

Priority Recommendation 1: Introduce a UK-style health and care workforce visa for Registered Nurses – one that is fit for aged care (supported by more prompt and efficient processing by Government and AHPRA) and ensure any policy design is informed by broad sector consultation and a coordinated approach within the Government functions of immigration and aged care.

Priority Recommendation 2: Review the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), that forms part of the requirements of obtaining an Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement (ACILA), by the end of 2023, in consultation with the aged care sector, including aged care providers.

In 2020, the UK Government introduced the Health and Care Worker Visa allowing clinical professionals to come to, or stay in, the UK to do an eligible job within their health and aged care sectors – accompanied by fast processing times of approximately three weeks. Health and Care visa holders are linked to their employer, although they can switch to another company licensed to sponsor visas. In February 2022, the Health and Care visa was extended to include care workers. Data has since shown significant increased growth in migration of health and care workers into the UK.³

Policy considerations such as sponsoring by employers, portability of the visa, wages and regulatory compliance will benefit from a coordinated approach across Government between the immigration and aged care functions, as well as informed by broad sector consultation.

Recommendation 3: Abandon labour market testing, as recommended by the Review of the Migration System Final Report, to be replaced by a reformed Ministerial Advisory Council on Skilled Migration (MACSM) and the expertise of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) (as advised by Jobs and Skills Councils such as HumanAbility in the case of aged care).

² Department of Health and Aged Care, [24/7 Registered Nurse responsibility](#) webpage; [Care minutes](#) webpage and [Senate Committee: Community Affairs Budget Estimates 2022-2023 \[Hot Issues Brief\]](#), Document 15 of FOI 4178 p.1-2

³ UK Government, [Health and Care Worker Visa](#) webpage and University of Oxford -The Migration Observatory, [Migration and the health and care workforce](#), June 2023

- Recommendation 4:** Raise the age for visa subclass 186 beyond 45, so that we can harness the long-term potential of our older workforce and retain their experience and skills in the aged care sector.
- Recommendation 5:** Ensure that the design of the migration system avoids unintended system disincentives for migrants to move to localities in need of workforce supply (such as the inter-relationship of the migration points system across states and territories).
- Recommendation 6:** Ensuring that visa portability is paired with fees that can be paid monthly, so that the current employer pays if an aged care worker decides to move workplaces.
- Recommendation 7:** That the work of the Australian Government's Care and Support Economy Taskforce and the Aged Care Taskforce consider the role and contribution of migration to addressing the workforce crisis in aged care, and that any recommendations for related policy frameworks, as well as any future financial arrangements for the aged care sector, do not create barriers for aged care providers to readily access migrant workers through Australia's migration system.

2. Wrap-around support for migration workers and their families

Our members tell us that the experience of their migrant workers when arriving in Australia to work in aged care is very important to them. They share the complexity experienced in navigating the migration system and observe that there are a range of success factors for settling into a new workplace and a new culture.

For many of ACCPA's approximately 1100 members, supporting migrant workers with induction, training and development, community linkages and wraparound supports such as housing, is an essential part of their ability to attract and retain a migrant workforce who will want to remain with them for the long-term.

Aged care providers share the objective of successfully settling and sustaining migrant workers in Australia in a way that is worker-centred and welcome Government initiatives to assist them provide dedicated and tailored support.

- Recommendation 8:** Ensure there is government support through funding, policy and bilateral opportunities for 'wrap-around' services for aged care workers across Australia to address employees' other needs, including availability of accommodation, schooling for children, and transport. A possible model may be the Family Accompaniment Pilot within the PALM Scheme.
- Recommendation 9:** Reduce the cost of education for worker's children (currently between \$6,300 and \$7,500 in 2024). This could be through a Federally funded relocation grant or an agreement through National Cabinet.

Recommendation 10: Identify options for housing support for migrant workers. Options may include infrastructure grants for on-site accommodation; and Federal-State partnerships to bring about local solutions in regional areas.


Recommendation 11: Assist newly arrived workers, particularly those providing home care services, to promptly apply for a driver's license. This could be through a Federally funded relocation grant or a State-by-State solution.

Collectively, these recommendations will result in a more stable environment for the residents, confidence in the care they will receive, assurance for the migrant worker in their future opportunities and confidence for the provider that they will be able to deliver the care needed, when its needed.

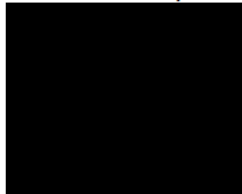
Refer Attachment: Responses by Mr Tom Symondson to Questions on Notice x 3.

1. Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP (Chair)
2. Dr Anne Webster MP (Deputy Chair)
3. Ms Allegra Spender MP

Together, this is our opportunity to design a pathway to care for older people in Australia that better supports those migrant workers who deliver this care, and in recognition of their significant and valuable contribution to our nation and the aged care sector. It is time to support the sector and aged care providers to achieve a strong settlement outcome for all.

If you have any further questions or would like to discuss, please contact Anne Liddell, Head of Policy at 

Yours sincerely



Roald Versteeg
General Manager, Policy and Advocacy
Aged & Community Care Providers Association