

A Fair Australia
Aged Care
Policy
ACTU CONGRESS 2003

A Better Aged Care System

1. The ACTU and affiliated unions acknowledge that the process of ageing is part of the natural life cycle.
2. The majority of older people will age in their own environment, supported by family and friends, and may require minimal support from aged care services.
3. Some older people however will require support to manage daily tasks which they were once able to attend to unaided, while others, as a result of ill health and/or frailty, will require more complex care.
4. To meet the varied needs of older people, a broad range of aged care services must be provided along a continuum of care which includes community services, residential services and acute hospital care, by a multi-disciplinary team of workers with a wide range of qualifications and skills.

Aged Care Services

5. The ACTU and affiliated unions will work in partnership with other stakeholders in the aged care sector to:
 - (a) campaign for quality aged care services that meet the specific needs of the community;
 - (b) ensure that appropriate aged care services are accessible to those that need them;
 - (c) promote an open and transparent complaints mechanism which will enable residents, staff, family members and concerned members of

the community to raise complaints regarding the care being delivered and the provision of services in an effective and efficient manner;

- (d) support the provision of aged care services in rural and remote regions;
- (e) support the provision of culturally diverse and sensitive aged care services;
- (f) promote the highest standard benchmark for quality care;
- (g) Campaign and lobby political parties to provide funding that reflects the cost of providing quality care, which includes the funding of staffing levels and skill mixes to the needs of residents based on a defined and properly costed benchmark of care;
- (h) pursue increased transparency and accountability in the use of public funds in the sector to ensure that public money is accounted for and that an optimal amount is spent on care; and
- (i) press for implementation of higher occupational health and safety standards in aged care facilities.

Aged Care Workforce

- 6. Unions will seek to ensure equitable wages and fair working conditions for workers in the aged care sector by:
 - (a) pursuing adequate funding and staffing by both Federal and State Governments;
 - (b) campaigning for minimum staffing levels, which are regulated and maintained to guarantee the safe provision of care;
 - (c) lobbying political parties and campaigning for a recruitment and retention plan that will address the serious staffing shortages in the aged care sector;
 - (d) pursuing reasonable workloads to ensure the safe delivery of care;
 - (e) pursuing reasonable hours of work and proper rostering systems to ensure that all workers in the aged care sector can fulfil their personal, family and professional objectives;

- (f) promote industrially and through the Commission, a stable workforce of permanent full-time and part-time employees and to ensure that where casual labour is required, such workers receive wages and working conditions commensurate with permanent workers, plus a loading which acknowledges the casual nature of their employment;
- (g) continuing union involvement in education and training of workers in the aged care sector;
- (h) taking all possible action to improve workplace health and safety standards for all aged care workers;
- (i) lobbying the Federal Government for a capital funding component for each aged care facility to allow for the prompt replacement or renewal of infrastructure or equipment necessary to provide for a safe and efficient workplace; and
- (j) campaigning for adequate funding for university and VET sector places to address the chronic shortage of workers in the aged care sector.

Organising Agenda in Aged Care

7. The ACTU and unions believe that the aged care sector has the potential to be a strong and influential sector within the union movement, politically and socially. It is important that the union movement develops this influence for the benefit of the workforce and the community as a whole.
8. The ACTU and unions will do this by acknowledging that the aged care sector is a growing labour force, recognising the importance of ensuring the growing labour force is organised and that an organised aged care sector will improve the working conditions and the level of care within that sector.