

AGED CARE SERVICES RESOLUTION ACTU CONGRESS 1997

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ACTU believes:

- [i] that unionists employed in aged care services should work in a national system of nursing home, hostel and community based care delivery, where the primary objective is quality of life, health, security and dignity for residents.
- [ii] The ACTU believes that the delivery of aged care services should be based on equity of access, quality of care and effective systems of scrutiny, accountability and redress in the interests of residents, consumers and the wider trade union movement

2. AGED CARE SYSTEM

2.1 Such a system should exhibit these key features:

- [i] Quality assurance processes that are substantive and effective at the point of care delivery, and which result in improved outcomes for the resident and client.
- [ii] The Federal Government funding supports research within aged care services in recognition of the need for excellence in this area.
- [iii] That Federal Government funding supports and enhances the delivery of effective nursing and personal care to residents by such personnel who are appropriately trained, accredited and/or registered. Such funding should enhance a comprehensive system of education and training for all workers in this sector.
- [iv] That the total of Federal Government funding and supplementary contributions by residents is sufficient to support equitable wages and conditions in awards and enterprise agreements covering staff in this sector.
- [v] That parity in wages and conditions with those of the public sector health care system confirms the importance and status of the aged care system.
- [vi] Where the taxpayer funded care subsidy matches the dependency and complexity of care and services required.
- [vii] That staffing levels and skills mix are such that the working environment is one where a reduction in the current high and

unwarranted level of back and lifting related injuries reaches acceptable benchmark levels.

- [viii] The ACTU confirms its belief that the greater proportion of aged care funding is derived from the Australian taxpayer and that effective and transparent obligations should be placed on the operators of aged care facilities to account for the use of such funds in service delivery.
- 2.2 The ACTU notes that, consistent with the need for financial accountability, there is an obligation upon operators to achieve a higher standard of management.
- 2.3 The ACTU notes that the Federal Government's emphasis on cost, and its reduction in federal government outlays, will have a severe structural impact on the viability of the nursing home sector, with the potential to undermine and compromise standards of care. The ACTU calls upon the Federal Government to fund the high capital infrastructure needs associated with such structural change.
- 2.4 The ACTU notes that the current Federal Government's indexation of and proposed coalescence of funding for care will impact adversely on the ability of nurses and carers to maintain quality of care in nursing homes in states which have had higher standard hourly rates such as Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales. This will also have an adverse impact on the level of services able to be delivered by other employees and their wage structures and conditions. The ACTU calls upon the Federal Government to provide indexation of care funding which will maintain parity of wages and career structures for nurses, and to extend such indexation to apply to all other employees in the sector.
- 2.5 The ACTU believes that, as a consequence of the community's critical interest in the integrity of a system of aged care services, the union movement should maintain and strengthen its historical co-operation and consultation with national consumer and community organisations.
- 2.6 Such a strategy of co-operation and consultation will have as its primary objective the defence of existing employment and quality of service standards, and the development of policy objectives for the ACTU and its affiliates which reflect the best interests of Australian society.
- 2.7 This ACTU policy recognises that the delivery of aged care services is critically reliant upon Federal Government budgetary priorities and the ACTU policy seeks to challenge that premise.
- 2.8 The ACTU will engage in discussions and negotiation with the relevant political parties, consumer and community organisations in the lead up to the next federal election, and through its affiliates report on and communicate the differences to and affinity with ACTU policy to the broader union constituency.
- 2.9 The ACTU recognises that failure to achieve funding and policy objectives in residential aged care compromises the health and well-being of residents and the ethical and professional standards of aged care workers.

<p><i>ACTU CONGRESS 1997</i></p> <p><i>AGED CARE SERVICES ~ DRAFT POLICY</i></p>
--

Replacement Paragraph 2.3

- 2.3 The ACTU notes that the current Federal Government's indexation of, and proposed coalescence of funding for care will impact adversely on the ability of nurses and carers to maintain quality of care in nursing homes in states which have had higher standard hourly rates such as Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales. This will also have an adverse impact on the level of services able to be delivered by other employees. The ACTU calls upon the Federal Government to provide indexation for care funding which will maintain parity of wages and career structures for nurses, and to extend such indexation to apply to all other employees in the sector.