

IT'S TIME TO HEED THE CALL AND CHANGE AGED CARE

Today marks the final day of hearings for the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and we acknowledge the very significant recommendations released by Counsel Assisting, Health Services Union (HSU) National Secretary Lloyd Williams said.

"The Counsel Assisting's 124 recommendations confirm the HSU's position that the Federal Government needs to completely change the aged care sector to deliver the level of high-quality care that older Australians need and deserve," Mr Williams said.

"While the recommendations are a significant stride towards fixing the broken aged care system, they need to be acted upon quickly," Mr Williams said.

"The aged care crisis is happening now, so there is no time to wait for reform."

Mr Williams said many of the recommendations have hit the mark in addressing the major and deep reform required at all levels of the aged care sector.

"From regulatory oversight to embedding the principles of high-quality care for older Australians in legislation, we hope to see these comprehensive recommendations adopted and strengthened by the Commissioners in the final report, and then actioned by the Morrison Government immediately," he said.

Mr Williams said Counsel Assisting has rightly recognised what the Interim Report told us and what the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted; the workforce is chronically undervalued and under resourced.

"We've known all along that significant investment into the workforce was required to deliver high-quality and holistic care for older Australians," Mr Williams said.

"We welcome the recommendation for minimum staffing levels with the appropriate skills mix which is crucial to delivering a high standard of care, however, minimum staffing also needs to be mandated for high care, not just the average, and we need to ensure that minimums do not become the maximum.

"We're pleased to see them tackle the staffing shortage crisis through attraction and retention of workers via increased wages.

"They've also accepted that properly funded and regular training provided to all aged care workers is vital, as is the engagement of more allied health professionals.

"We are concerned however, that the recommendations don't do enough to address the major issue of insecure employment that is rife in the sector and while changes to the award system are welcomed, we need a strengthening of the industrial framework to ensure every worker is supported by access to improved wages, conditions and representation.

"Overall, our main concern with these recommendations is the proposed timing, we are still in a pandemic and the inadequacies of the system are putting aged care workers and the people they care for at serious risk.

"Waiting until 2022 and beyond to get to work on the major reform needed is too long.

"We cannot continue to short-change aged care workers, older Australians, and their loved ones."

ENDS

HSU National Secretary Lloyd Williams is available for further comments.

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About the HSU | The Health Services Union (HSU) is a growing member-based union with over 90,000 members working across the health, aged care and disability sectors in every state and territory of Australia.