

## **GREENS SA AGED CARE POLICY**



The aged care policies of the present government have failed to provide older people with the care they need for a reasonable quality of life. There is justifiable community concern that the current aged care system, inadequate staffing levels, together with the growing numbers of people being forced to wait longer for community and residential care places, are indicative of the government's lack of priority in this important policy area.

A national shortage of nurses has affected the supply available to aged care, particularly in rural and regional areas. Lower pay rates in the aged care sector than in other nursing areas and poor conditions have exacerbated this issue.

Significantly more aged care places will be needed as our population ages.

### **1. Principles**

The Australian Greens (SA) believe:

- 1.1 the Commonwealth should continue to play a central role in the provision, regulation and support of aged care services
- 1.2 access to good quality appropriate health and aged care services should be on the basis of need and not on the ability to pay or the place of residence
- 1.3 people who need residential care should be provided with high quality support, nursing and personal care, in safe and comfortable surroundings
- 1.4 older people should be able to stay in their own neighbourhoods as they age
- 1.5 people who work in the aged care sector should be adequately remunerated and qualified

### **2. Goals**

The Australian Greens (SA) will work to:

- 2.1 ensure that the Commonwealth continues to play a central role in the provision, regulation and support of aged care services

#### Residential and Community Aged Care

- 2.2 ensure that access to residential aged care is determined on the basis of need, not financial means
- 2.3 ensure that the design of aged care facilities caters for the needs of all residents, including those with special needs such as dementia sufferers
- 2.4 ensure a sufficient stock of aged care accommodation is maintained to enable prompt access wherever and whenever it is needed

- 2.5 ensure that people in rural and regional areas have access to comprehensive aged care services appropriate to their needs, located within reasonable distance of familiar surroundings and of friends
- 2.6 ensure financial viability, with start-up mechanisms, for community-based and controlled aged care services in all regions and communities, including culturally appropriate aged care for Indigenous Australians and people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- 2.7 maintain an appropriate balance between Home and Community Care (HACC) services and residential and community aged care services, to ensure that older people can access the kind of care they choose, and the kind of care they need, with appropriate Commonwealth support for HACC services
- 2.8 ensure accessibility and cultural sensitivity of all residential and community aged care and HACC services with:
- services designed after appropriate consultation with Indigenous and non-English speaking background (NESB) communities
  - culturally and linguistically appropriate information campaigns to ensure that Indigenous and NESB communities are aware of aged care options and services
  - mandatory cross-cultural training for all staff working with NESB and/or Indigenous aged communities, and cultural competence testing as part of accreditation and service validation procedures
  - provision of adequate health care translation services
  - involvement of family in care decisions, including appropriate dietary and cultural arrangements
  - facilitation of religious observance by older people in care
  - facilitation of the development of NESB and Indigenous community-controlled residential aged care facilities
- 2.9 ensure that residential care subsidies more accurately reflect the cost of care delivered, including administrative and accreditation costs
- 2.10 require that:
- facilities clearly segregate capital and operating costs
  - operating costs take account of the requirements of the Aged Care Standards
  - mechanisms are in place to enable homes to comply with improved building standards and improved care outcomes of the accreditation requirements
- 2.11 ensure, through targeted government grants and taxation relief, that community-based and smaller centres are able to improve and maintain existing residential facilities, particularly in rural and regional areas, to meet building certification standards
- 2.12.1 ensure bed licences are allocated on a regional or community basis, and may not be on-sold or transferred out of the allocated region

### Qualified Nurses and Carers

- 2.13 establish pay equity with nurses working in the acute sector
- 2.14 increase the number of skilled nurses and carers available to aged care
- 2.15 ensure staff ratios and skill mix in aged care facilities are appropriate to the levels of care required for all residents

### Complaints Resolution Scheme

- 2.16 provide sufficient resources for the Aged Care Complaints Resolution Scheme<sup>1</sup> to be more responsive to residential care complaints

### Home Support

- 2.17 ensure the vital services that allow older people to remain at home in comfort and security, such as personal care, housekeeping, home maintenance, community transport and meals services, are properly provided and resourced on a regional and community basis
- 2.18 assist older people to maintain strong links with their local community by ensuring they have access to adequate and appropriate transport

### Support for Carers

- 2.19 support the people who care for older people at home with sufficient placements in respite care facilities to avoid carer fatigue
- 2.20 support a funded carer network program in each metropolitan, rural and regional area.

## **3. Short Term Targets**

The Australian Greens (SA) will:

### Residential Aged Care

- 3.1 simplify and streamline rules for residents' contributions to their care costs to ensure equity and fairness, and to protect older people from the premature sale of their homes while still occupied by a spouse, partner or dependant
- 3.2 improve the viability of rural and regional aged care facilities through targeted government grants and taxation relief so that smaller centres and rural areas can provide the number of places required for their communities
- 3.3 improve the links between health care, aged care and other services so that older people have continuity of care, and can access the care they need without having to deal with multiple programs and levels of government
- 3.4 ensure that the capital expenditure necessary to meet the requirements of certification for aged care facilities is planned and additional funding or tax relief is provided by the government to meet these costs

- 3.5 ensure that aged care accommodation is of the required standard and quality and complies with all current relevant building and safety codes and regulations
- 3.6 ensure that aged care accommodation is comfortable and home-like for the residents and is suited to their care needs
- 3.7 give preference to community-based and controlled aged care facilities in licence applications
- 3.8 implement a rigorous accreditation process based on observation and checking of actual care given and tighter monitoring of poor aged care providers, with greater penalties for non-compliance
- 3.9 increase the number of aged care places with a combination of operational residential aged care places and community aged care packages
- 3.10 ensure the highest level of protection against violence towards older people including:
  - incorporation of legislative protection for older people into the domestic violence legislation,
  - coverage of the needs of older people in all material on family violence,
  - investigation of alternative models of protection including the Queensland Police Elder Abuse Prevention Unit,
  - research into the problem of abuse of older people and the establishment of a task force to formulate strategies for action,
  - a review of protocols for government and non-government agencies working with older people to provide for mandatory reporting with a view to eliminating abuse of the elderly.
- 3.11 subsidise the cost of transport for people in residential care

#### Qualified Nurses

- 3.12 support the continuation of Carelink<sup>2</sup>, with services in languages and with cultural sensitivities required for our multicultural population
- 3.13 provide additional funds specifically for nurses wishing to enter or re-enter aged care nursing
- 3.14 achieve pay equity for registered nurses working in aged care with nurses working elsewhere in health and the hospital system
- 3.15 fund additional clerical staff to free registered nurses from documentation duties, allowing them to concentrate on 'hands on' nursing and clinical work
- 3.16 reduce the risk of staff injury by upgrading the quality of management control, obtaining appropriate equipment – particularly lifting apparatus and adjustable beds – and resident transport, and improving the quality of employee training
- 3.17 adjust staff ratios and skills mix in aged care facilities to provide the appropriate levels of care required for all residents – particularly to cover after hours, weekends and holiday periods

## Home Support and Carers

- 3.18 support older people who choose to move to more appropriate housing in their neighbourhoods.
- 3.19 support the continuation of carer respite centres with services in languages and with cultural sensitivities required for our multicultural population

## Training for Staff

- 3.20 provide funded on-the-job training for staff of small rural aged care homes (this approach allows the trainees to learn and practise their skills in a familiar and supportive environment while working within the existing systems in the home)
- 3.21 increase the number of traineeships and qualification upgrades to aged care nurses and carers, with support for associated costs of travel and accommodation
- 3.22 provide skills updates for staff through distance learning as the care needs of residents change and the related work practices are reviewed as part of the home's continuous improvement system, as required for aged care accreditation

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1. A Government-appointed Commissioner of Complaints oversees the effectiveness of the Complaints Resolution Scheme which provides a link between the resident or representative and the aged care facility and facilitates an acceptable outcome to the dispute. The scheme regularly consults with users of the system on the effectiveness of the process.

2. The Carelink program has 65 centres across Australia that provide information about aged care services using a national free call number via a linked network. The centre taps into existing community care services and provides information on home maintenance, Meals on Wheels, local aged care services, respite services and assessment for aged care facilities. The centres also link people with health professionals and GPs.