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Department of House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport

Online submission

FECCA Submission to Inquiry into the Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and their organisations. FECCA provides advocacy, develops policy and promotes issues on behalf of its constituency to Government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism so as to build a productive and culturally rich Australian society. FECCA's policies are developed around the concepts of empowerment and inclusion and are formulated with the common good of all Australians in mind.

FECCA has had a longstanding presence in policy and systemic advocacy on ageing and aged care issues for CALD Australians. FECCA is the leading stakeholder in CALD ageing and aged care policy, and has been a significant contributor to a range of collaborations, including the National Aged Care Alliance, and partnerships with other peak bodies, to achieve the inclusion and empowerment of older CALD Australians, their carers and CALD people who work in the aged care industry. FECCA undertook the consultations to inform the National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for People from CALD backgrounds and was a member of its implementation committee. Currently, FECCA is represented on the Aged Care Sector Committee Diversity Sub-Group where it is working collaboratively with the Department of Health in developing and implementing the Diversity Framework.

FECCA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into the Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018. FECCA gives consent for this submission to be published in whole or in part. For further information, please contact FECCA CEO Emma Campbell at emma@fecca.org.au.

Background

The Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill proposes:

- Quarterly reporting on the ratio of aged care recipients to aged care staff (staffing ratio) by aged care providers
- Break-down of staff (employed by aged care service providers) by category and where applicable, level

- That any change to staffing ratio that is greater than 10 percent (and occurs between quarterly reports) be notified (within 28 days of a change) for the purpose of it being made public.

CALD Australians in Aged Care

The 2016 Census of Population and Housing showed that more than a quarter (26%) of Australia's population (6,163,667 people) were born overseas, up from 25% in 2011. In 2016, there were over 300 separately identified languages spoken in Australian homes. More than one-fifth (21 per cent) of Australians spoke a language other than English at home.¹

By 2021, it is expected that every third person aged 65 and over will be from a CALD background. A large proportion of older people from CALD backgrounds have limited English language proficiency due to limited exposure to formal English language education. Some people may revert to their first language as they age. Language issues can present significant barriers for people needing ageing and aged care services.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, percentage of CALD aged care targeted population in Australia in 2016 was 22.6%². Out of that number

- 21.6% were receiving Commonwealth Home Support Program
- 26.6% were in home care levels 1-2
- 27.6% were on higher level packages 3-4
- 18.9% were in residential aged care.

The Productivity Commission has estimated that by 2050 the aged care workforce will need to have grown to around 980,000 workers. The report emphasises the importance of monitoring of the sector and its workforces in order to keep all stakeholders informed and help the design and implementation of new policies to meet this growth³. FECCA believes that having a reporting requirement on the providers put into legislation would help towards achieving this goal.

According to the same report the estimated proportion of the residential aged care workforce working in direct care roles continues to fall. In 2016, 65 per cent of residential aged care employees work in direct care roles, compared with 73 per cent in 2012, 76 per cent in 2007 and 74 per cent in 2003. In light of these figures, FECCA's position that having information on staffing ratios by individual providers will help increase transparency of individual providers and the entire sector.

FECCA notes that Senate Community Affairs References Committee in its report on the Inquiry into the Future of Australia's Aged Care Workforce in June 2017, Recommendation 10 concludes: *The committee recommends that the government consider, as part of the implementation of consumer directed care, requiring aged care service providers to publish and update their staff to client ratios in order to facilitate informed decision making by aged*

¹ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/Media%20Release3>

² <https://gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/Topics/Services-and-places-in-aged-care/Explore-services-and-places-in-aged-care>

³ ³ The Aged Care Workforce 2016, Australian Government Department of Health, March 2017 https://agedcare.health.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1426/f/documents/03_2017/nacwcs_final_report_290317.pdf

*care consumers.*⁴ We are happy to see that this recommendation has now been transformed into legislation.

FECCA's submission to the proposed Bill

FECCA supports the Bill in its current form.

FECCA supports the requirements by the Bill put on the providers to quarterly report on the staff/recipient ratios, on the categories and levels of staff employed and that any change of ratio higher than 10% should be notified to the Secretary.

FECCA does however has several concerns we would like to raise with regards to the Bill.

Firstly, as evidenced by the Aged Care Workforce census report from 2017, employees in the aged care sector can be employed on full time, part time or casual bases. According to the report, around 10% of the workforce are employed on casual bases. We believe it will be important to regulate how the providers will report on the numbers of part time and casual staff in their reports. Also, for all part time and casual staff, the providers should be expected to provide average working hours numbers in the reporting period.

Secondly, along with the Bill and the numbers, there should be an explanation provided to the consumers, either by the Government or the providers, how this Bill will impact them. The consumers should be able to understand what the specific staffing ratio means for service provision and them individually. This is particularly important for CALD consumers who have low knowledge of the aged care systems in Australia. They should be provided with relevant information on how much attendance they can expect to get under a standard staff ratio. Having the information on attendance clearly explained to consumers would help them make informed choice.

The Bill outlines that the "Secretary must make publicly available any information about staff to care recipient ratios of residential care services notified to the Secretary under section 9-3C". FECCA's view is that this information should be published both on the My Aged Care Service Finder and on the individual providers' websites. We believe it would be useful for the consumers if the Service Finder was amended to incorporate staffing ratio, for example:

Home Page – Navigate – Search – Refine – Compare – Price – **Staffing Ratio** – Comparison

FECCA also proposes that the information on the staff ratio is included in the information package provided to the consumers when assessing a facility (before buying) or perhaps even included in the service provision agreements. This would be important for consumers of CALD backgrounds who fail to engage with online portals for receiving information and perhaps prefer to receive information in face to face communication or by visiting the facilities.

⁴ <https://engage.dss.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Aged-Care-workforce.pdf>