

THE VOICE of Pensioners and Superannuants

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Committee finds nurses in nursing homes is a good thing



An NSW Legislative Council Committee has recommended that the NSW Government enforces staffing ratios in nursing homes and recognises the importance of registered nurses in nursing homes. The committee has also suggested setting up a register which identifies nursing home staff who are perpetrators of elder abuse.

On 21 October 2020, the NSW Parliament established a committee to enquire into the requirement of the Public Health Act 2010 (NSW) for a registered nurse to be on duty in a (high care) nursing home at all times. The committee made several recommendations relating to staffing and the dignity of residents in nursing homes in NSW in its report that was released on 10 June.

The report recommended that the NSW Government urge the Australian Government to implement and provide funding for staffing ratios in nursing homes in NSW.

The report also supported the presence of a registered nurse at all times in a nursing home, arguing that by having a specialised health practitioner such as a registered nurse, costs would be saved in two ways. Firstly, residents that are being treated in hospitals may be transferred back to their nursing home faster as a registered nurse is equipped to treat residents with complex care needs, and

ambulance services would not be used for transferring residents to hospital for acute health conditions that a registered nurse could treat.

The committee argued that by having a registered nurse on duty all the time the public health costs of residents would be reduced, countering the argument that having a registered nurse on all the time would be too costly for some nursing homes.

However, NSW Government committee members wrote a dissenting statement, recommending that NSW wait for changes in the federal Aged Care Act to take place before making their own changes.

Changes to the federal Aged Care Act 1997 are not due for another two years.

The NSW Government previously led the way by requiring a registered nurse present in nursing homes at all times without federal law requiring this. It can do it again?

Beware of financial abuse as you get older!



Financial abuse is one of the most common forms of elder abuse. Elder financial abuse is a community problem which will likely increase with an ageing population. By 2055, one in four Australians will be over 65.

Banks are very used to picking up where their older customers are being financially abused. However, the more people are aware of it being common, the more chance there is the incidence of elder financial abuse can be reduced.

Elder financial abuse can be hard to detect, so it's very important to be aware of how people might be taking advantage of their parents, loved ones or friends.

Financial abuse can take many forms, including spending money without permission, forging signatures, coercing someone to sign something, pension-skimming, using a person's bank card without permission as well as denying them access to their own money or bank statements.

If you're concerned you are being coerced or taken advantage of financially, banks welcome it if you contact them about it. Work with your bank!

Banks often get a bad rap but they are taking elder financial abuse very seriously. They give specialised training to staff to help them to recognise warning signs and how to support customers. They also use computer programs to identify suspicious transactions and to report suspected abuse to the relevant authorities.

Banks can help with measures to protect your finances, like setting up co-signatory accounts, pre-set transactions limits, transaction notifications and blocks on overseas transactions.

If you are the victim of elder financial abuse and live in New South Wales, you can contact the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline on 1800 628 221.

NSW Regional Seniors Travel Card: here to stay?



ON 16 June it was announced that the Regional Seniors Travel Card will run for an additional two years.

The card gives eligible seniors living in regional NSW \$250 to use on transport costs including fuel, taxi fares and pre-booked NSW TrainLink train and coach services.

This time around eligibility for the card has extended. From 1 January 2022, eligible applicants will include people of Age Pension age (which is 66 years and 6 months from 1 July 2021) receiving either an Age Pension, a Disability Support Pension, a Carer Payment, a Service Pension, a War Widow(er)'s Pension as well as people who hold a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

The inclusion of Disability Support Pensioners and Carer Payment recipients is a great improvement to the scheme. However, the scheme still excludes older people in receipt of the JobSeeker Payment.