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CATHOLIC HEALTH AUSTRALIA SAYS AGED CARE SUPPORT WORKERS MUST ALSO GET A PAY RISE

Catholic Health Australia welcomes the Fair Work Commission's interim decision to award aged care workers a 15 per cent pay rise.

But the peak advocacy body, whose members account for 12 per cent of not-for profit aged care facilities, believes it is critical that support workers also receive a boost to stop them leaving the sector.

The FWC on Friday ruled that direct care workers should immediately get a 15 per cent interim increase to their minimum wages - but crucial support workers including kitchen, laundry and maintenance staff are still awaiting their fate.

CHA's Aged Care Director Jason Kara said these workers, who are essential to the provision of good quality aged care sector, also deserved a wage increase.

"Catholic Health Australia welcomes the Fair Work Commission's interim decision. Better wages and conditions are key to attracting and retaining workers, and to restoring dignity to the carers who do such important work for society," he said.

"The Commission has not yet decided on whether around 100,000 administration and support workers will also receive a pay rise, and if so, how much. These workers are critical to delivering quality aged care and deserve a pay rise.

"CHA supports immediately passing increases on and delivering a much-needed boost to the workforce. We look forward to the Government delivering on its promise to fully fund the wage increase."

Mr Kara said the government should also consider other policies to make sure the aged care sector - where more than half of facilities are running at a loss - can recruit and retain staff.

Earlier this year a CHA survey found there were almost 50,000 nursing and care worker vacancies in the sector, so this is a welcome step to plugging that gap. CHA participated in the Government's Jobs Summit in August.

"There are several measures that can help improve the recruitment of aged care workers such as affordable flexible, out of hours childcare options for care workers; reform nurse training practices to get nurses into aged care facilities sooner, and streamlining the immigration process by listing aged care workers as a priority cohort and reducing fees and processing times," he said.

Notes to editors: Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is Australia's largest non-government grouping of health and aged care services accounting for approximately 10 per cent of hospital-based healthcare in Australia. Our members also provide around 25 percent of private hospital care, 5 percent of public hospital care, 12 percent of aged care facilities, and 20 percent of home care and support for the elderly.