



## **Care minutes performed by religious sisters to be recognised**

### **Catholic Health Australia**

Catholic Health Australia has welcomed the Federal Government's decision to ensure personal care minutes delivered by religious sisters in aged care homes are formally recognised and count towards mandated targets.

The Department of Health, Ageing and Disability has updated the definition of a Personal Care Worker to include a person who is a member of a religious order, such as a nun or religious sister, who is also a registered or enrolled nurse.

"Catholic aged care providers raised concerns that the valuable care provided by volunteer religious sisters was not being counted under the current aged care rules, despite their nursing qualifications and years of service," said Director of Aged and Community Care Alex Lynch.

"This is a sensible change that recognises the vital role of qualified religious sisters in aged care, particularly supporting low-income Australians and those living in the regions. We thank Aged Care Minister Sam Rae for listening to those concerns and acting quickly to ensure this care is now properly recognised."

The change provides reassurance to faith-based aged care providers that every minute of direct care, whether provided by qualified lay staff or religious sisters, will be treated equally under the law.

Care minutes count towards a facility's star rating, help determine funding supplements, and are mandatory to meet government quality standards. Under the new Aged Care Act, they also impact facility funding.

"Our members are committed to delivering compassionate, person-centred care, and this policy change affirms the value of all who contribute to that mission," Mr Lynch said.

The Little Sisters of the Poor order has operated in Australia since 1884; they are responsible for three aged care homes in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, caring for 170 older Australians of low or no income.

“We have five to six sisters working in each of our homes performing a range of duties from nursing and personal care through to spiritual support,” said Sister Angela, Regional Superior of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

“Without the Little Sisters there is no operation and this would leave hundreds of elderly poor with limited or no options for aged care. We have dedicated ourselves to caring for the elderly and it’s important that our care minutes are recognised and that we meet our legal obligations to provide them,” Sister Angela said.

The Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus have been caring for older Australians for more than 70 years. Their Francis of Assisi Home in Mackay was the first home for the aged to be established in North Queensland when it opened in 1954.

The order operates 148 beds in Mackay and 30 beds in Adelaide.

“We have three Sisters who are registered nurses. Between them they contribute up to 154 hours a week of nursing and personal care to our residents,” said Director of Nursing Sister Pauline Bonavia.

“God called us to religious life to serve others with compassionate and generous love and we do our work according to this calling. Our residents rely on the Sisters for compassionate medical, nursing, and spiritual care; without them, this essential support would be lost.”

**Notes to editors:** *Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is Australia’s largest non-government, not-for-profit group of health, community, and aged care providers. Our members operate 80 hospitals in each Australian state and the ACT, providing around 30 per cent of private hospital care and 5 per cent of public hospital care, in addition to extensive community and residential aged care. There are 63 private hospitals operated by CHA members, including St Vincent’s, Calvary, Mater, St John of God and Cabrini. CHA members also provide approximately 12 per cent of all aged care facilities across Australia, in addition to around 20 per cent of home care services. 25 per cent of our members’ service provision is regional, rural and remote.*

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