

Submission to the Royal Commission

Helping to solve aged care staffing issues and Royal Commission challenges

By Robert James Farrow CEO "In Home Care Solutions Pty Ltd"

Firstly, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present the following to the Royal Commission as suggested by Mr Mark Dowsett, Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

The basis of this submission is about the lack of quality trained staff and thus this submission applies to all of the three questions as listed on the Commission's website!

It also addresses, in general, all the terms of reference as follows:

In reviewing the 6 main points raised in the **Terms of Reference** for the upcoming **Royal Commission into "Aged Care Quality and Safety"**, two items stick out above all others: **"the future challenges and opportunities for delivering accessible, affordable and high-quality aged care services in Australia"** and **"investment in the aged care workforce"**.

Here is the challenge for EVERY aged care business in Australia: you can have fantastic facilities, excellent technology, plenty of money, but if you don't have enough qualified and compassionate staff you have NOTHING!

Currently we have about one million people in Australia receiving care at some levels; the main warning bell is that 800,000 of them are receiving some level of community care at home. WHAT WILL WE DO when that 800,000 need 24/7 care at home, WHO WILL LOOK AFTER THEM?

In 2012 and the four years preceding, the then governments did surveys on Aged Care, that were then developed into the "Living Longer Living Better program".

The main point here is that over 90% of those surveyed said they wanted to stay in their own homes! It also demonstrated that by 2020 we would need over 700,000 care workers.

To date, according to statistics, we have less than 250,000 health care workers!

Our challenge was then, as it is now, that we cannot find enough trained staff to meet the needs of our ageing population.

To meet the stated Terms of Reference, Australia needs fully-trained compassionate staff in the many thousands and we just do not have them in Australia; so, we MUST import them now whilst building up, over the next 10 years, our local supply via our world-renowned education system.

What do we need to meet our staffing goals and potential staffing Ratios?

Firstly, we need to have everyone recognise the need and get behind a structured and defined immigration program directed at finding qualified compassionate nurses and other Aged Care professionals from outside of Australia.

By Everyone I mean:

1. The Unions
2. Department of Home affairs,
3. Department of Health,
4. All other stake holders, including operators of aged care facilities and services.

Next, we need to identify countries:

1. Who have the capacity to supply aged care workers.
2. Whose training and education systems meet or come close to meeting our standards, and
3. Whose first or second language of choice is English.

Based on the past six years of experience training and bringing in suitable students, we have identified a country that meets all the above conditions and that country is **the Philippines**.

These are the facts behind my solution.

1. The language of choice for all University and Private school teaching is English
2. Most if not all, road signs and other signs are in English
3. Food packaging, restaurant menus etc, are mainly in English
4. Their legal system is spoken and written in English
5. Their culture is one of;
 - a. Compassion. Highest Roman Catholic population outside of Italy.
 - b. Over 10,000,000 outsourced workers to other countries (OFW's)
 - c. Nurses complete a 4-year University Bachelor degree in Nursing (BSN)
 - d. They are hardworking and resilient. Just ask any current nursing home where they are now working, who is the most popular care worker? 9 out of 10 will say our Filipino staff.
6. There are over 300,000 un or underemployed Nurses ready and willing to come to Australia.... Need I say more?

As stated, my company, In Home Care Solutions Pty Ltd, in conjunction with our sister company "Nursing Solutions inc" based in the Philippines, has trained more than 60 staff and sent many to Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) for further training with a view to becoming Australian Registered RN's under AHPRA guidelines.

We have a tried and proven pathway with the blessing and support of Austrade Manila and Educare College in Brisbane, along with many Filipino people and organisations.

All that is needed is funding and specific legislation to make the supply shortage situation go away for ever.

The rest of the problems currently being experienced and reported on, will be significantly reduced and for a lot less cost than at present.

With regards to costs. I note that the Victorian government has announced a \$250 Million fund to increase the workforce in Victoria by 1,100 nurses and midwives. I did my sums and found for that same amount, using our legal and working pathway, we could bring in over 8,000 Nurses!

The Solution.

Currently the Australian Skills Shortages Register already has;

Registered Nurse (Aged Care) ANZSCO Code 254412 and Enrolled Nurse ANZSCO Code 411411 listed therefore there is no need for any special consideration by the Immigration Department of Home Affairs to allow qualified Nurses and Enrolled nurses into our country.

What we need is to expand on our already proven and working pathway to allow greater numbers of Filipino's into our Aged Care workforce.

To implement our plan the main actions needed are as follows:

1. Visa conditions will need to be adjusted, maybe just bringing the Philippines under this scheme to Immigration Level 1. Currently they are level 3. We could also consider eligibility terms similar to the SC407 Training Visa to allow Filipinos, with the right accredited education, fast and easy access to Australia. There is also the Temporary Skills shortages Visa, SC 482.
By using current visa systems, we are not asking for any special consideration thus avoiding further discussion and red tape!
2. These students would enter our RTO and TAFE education system with free or subsidised training in Certificate IV in Ageing Support, Course Code: CHC43015. As students they would be allowed to work as per the SC407, it maybe that some initial assistance with food and lodging will be required.
3. Aged care companies/operators would be pre-qualified to take these students for the practical placement with the student, being assessed at that facility, to be given the full certificate and then hired by that company full time, initially as a PCA (Personal Care Attendant.)
4. The facility being subsidised would then allow the Student to do further education, again either free or subsidised, to attain their AHPRA registration as an RN or ANMAC as an Enrolled Nurse, based upon the needs of the hiring company at that time.
5. To ensure supply of the highest education level we would approach the Philippine Universities governing body CHED (Commission on Higher Education, Philippines), to provide them with tools to bring their current and older students (Alumni) up to speed.
It may also be possible again to speed up the process to have them incorporate Certificate IV Aging support into their curriculum, but I feel this is for the future.
6. Our company would be the company overseeing the program as we already have successfully achieved this process. To achieve the volumes necessary, we will need private investors along with assistance of other stakeholders ANMF, AHPRA and ANMAC and maybe other relevant departments of the Federal government.

In Summary.

The main problem behind the current issues in Aged Care is, not enough trained staff. We, Australia, cannot, in the short term, produce enough trained staff to work in Aged care because as fast as we do more and more Australians turn 70 and need in home care because they cannot afford the huge cost of buying into a retirement village or going into a nursing home **but above all they don't want to!**

The Philippines has the capacity to supply all our short-term needs, all we need is a focused migration program and with private and government backing to partially fund Agencies and Providers to get these Filipino Nurses up to Australian standards.

In the beginning, as stated above, all they need is Certificate IV in Ageing Support. Later they can be trained at a higher level to meet AHPRA or ANMAC standards.

My company has done this and is doing it but at a small scale and would welcome sharing our model with any interested investor for the good of our aging population.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

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Thank you for your submission to the Royal Commission. Your reference number is AWF.001.00538.