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UnitingCare Australia calls for increase in aged care wages

UnitingCare Australia is calling on the major parties to commit to fully funding an increase in aged care wages ahead of the 2022 Federal Election.

"Aged care workers are the lowest paid caring workforce, yet they provide some of the most important work caring for our loved ones", said National Director, Claerwen Little.

"The starting rate for a personal carer is $1.29 higher than the national minimum wage – just $21.62 per hour. An entry level Registered Nurse in aged care earns 28% less than the equivalent in a NSW Public Hospital.

"Around 86% of the workforce in direct care roles identify as female – so this is largely an issue of gender equality too".

The UnitingCare Aged Care Network supports approximately 97,000 older people, comprising 8.5% of total residential beds and 10% of Home Care Packages nationally.

"Without a skilled, engaged and properly remunerated workforce, the aged care sector cannot continue to deliver the essential care and services older Australians deserve and our community expects. Crucially, any level of unfunded pay increase will further threaten the financial viability of many providers, so the government must commit to fully funding the wages increase", Ms Little said.

"We have costed the increase at approximately $4 billion per year in our submission to the Fair Work Commission and 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission, based on a 25 per cent average uplift in wages. This is our analysis of what we think the approximate cost could be, which puts into perspective the scale of the challenge.

"We call on the major parties to commit to fully funding a wages increase and give certainty and hope to a sector that has given so much these past few years – surely they deserve our recognition today".

About UnitingCare Australia

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the Uniting Church's community services network and an agency of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. We advocate for policies and practices which enhance the dignity of people, especially those who are most vulnerable.

The UnitingCare network is one of the largest networks of community services in Australia, supporting 1.4 million people every year across 1,600 sites in urban, rural, and remote communities, with over 50,000 staff and 30,000 volunteers. The UnitingCare Aged Care Network supports approximately 97,000 older people, comprising 8.5% of total residential beds and 10% of Home Care Packages nationally.

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