



Australian Nursing  
& Midwifery Federation  
(SA Branch)

With you at work and in practice

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Aged care worker collapses from lack of hydration

The COVID onslaught is causing havoc within the aged care sector with reports that South Australian care workers are fatigued and dehydrated from long hours in personal protective equipment, with one fainting on the job.

COVID isolation regulations have led to extreme staff shortages and consequently excessive workloads.

Just weeks into the borders re-opening, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) has heard stories of one aged care site having no personal protective equipment (PPE) stock and requiring urgent deliveries.

These alarming accounts come amid reports of tens of thousands of aged care residents in lockdown in South Australia and Australia-wide due to COVID outbreaks, with hundreds of private aged care homes nationally still waiting for booster shots and rapid antigen tests (RAT).

Nationally there were just 385 active cases in aged care on December 23. By late last week there were almost 1,400 residents and just over 1,800 staff classified as active cases.

“In 2020, COVID blindsided the aged care sector, resulting in the tragic deaths of 678 people interstate,” ANMF (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Adj Associate Professor Elizabeth Dabars AM said.

“Incredulously, in 2022, COVID continues to sweep through our most vulnerable community who once again have been left hopelessly exposed through the Morrison Government’s ineptitude or, worse, indifference.”

*Services supported by the ANMF (SA Branch)*

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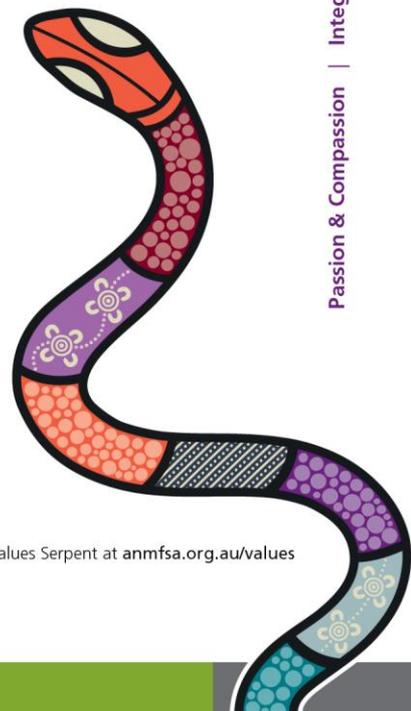
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The ANMF says the Federal Government has completely failed to plan for adequate surge workforce capacity and invest in staff despite knowing the chronic understaffing that has overwhelmed the sector for a decade and further highlighted by the Aged Care Royal Commission.

“We have no lifestyle for the residents, they are confined to their rooms,” said one enrolled nurse in South Australian country aged care.

“Residents remain in bed as there is not enough staff. Extra services were NOT provided as promised from SA Health.

“There has been no preparation from either levels of government in relation to personal protective equipment stock”.

A registered nurse from an Adelaide aged care facility reported that the site had no PPE stock and urgent deliveries had to be made from SA Health. The nurse also reported difficulty in accessing PCR swabs to test residents. There are also reports of staff being unable to meet SA Health requirements related to testing because of the lack of access to rapid antigen tests.

The nurse said staff had nowhere to rest and a personal care worker in PPE had fainted as they had not had the appropriate hydration breaks.

Another registered nurse from aged care reported having to do a 17-hour shift due to other staff being listed as close contacts. The nurse said staff are being asked to work in full PPE until their test results come back.

An enrolled nurse at a country site said that due to positive cases in the facility, management had decided that only nursing staff are allowed on the floor. They now must deliver meals, serve food and attend to laundry duties - all this on top of caring for residents’ clinical needs.

“Despite the lessons of the Royal Commission and the massive COVID death toll from the 2020 outbreak, aged care staff and residents alike continue to suffer from woeful lack of staffing, lack of resources and lack of adequate protection against COVID,” Ms Dabars said.

“The Morrison Government must take immediate action to arrest the snowballing crises that continue to wreak havoc in aged care.



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“We urge people and politicians to join our campaign to improve conditions for nursing and care staff in aged care in order to deliver high-quality safe care to our most vulnerable population.”

*Join our campaign to fix aged care at [anmfsa.org.au/agedcare](https://anmfsa.org.au/agedcare)*

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