



ROYAL COMMISSION RESPONSE TO COVID-19

On 20 March 2020 the Royal Commission suspended hearings and workshops due to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. The Commissioners recognised government, providers, workers and their representatives needed to focus all their attention on responding to the virus and supporting the needs of older people during the crisis.

On 28 April the Commission called for submissions on how the aged care sector has responded to the pandemic. The ANMF provided a submission setting out how nurses and care workers are integral to identifying, managing and treating patients with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 as well as dealing with the ongoing and everyday aged care activities in increasingly difficult circumstances. These were illustrated with quotes from the ANMF's most recent survey of aged care nurses and carers. The submission also addressed the various Government responses to the pandemic, for example the Retention Bonus, the need for paid pandemic leave and the ongoing need for adequate provision and use of PPE.

The submission referred to a report prepared by the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association analysing what had occurred at Newmarch House during the outbreak of COVID-19 over April and May. The ANMF draws the conclusion that much can be learned from the Newmarch House experience. We further concluded that all of the issues of concern before the Royal Commission, most significantly the lack of mandated minimum staffing levels and skills mix, had been highlighted by the tragic events unfolding in residential aged care.

The submission can be found here: <https://bit.ly/anmf-sub-rc-covid-19-agedcare>.

Sadly, since making our submission on the aged care response to COVID-19, the situation in Victoria has deteriorated rapidly over July and August and many of the problems identified at Newmarch have been repeated. The Commission will hold a live-streamed hearing into the impact of the virus and how the response has been managed between 10-13 August. The intention of the hearing is to understand what has happened and what can be learned, rather than to lay blame. Federal Secretary, Ms Annie Butler will give evidence at the hearing.

FINAL PUBLIC SUBMISSION

As a result of the disruption caused by the pandemic, the timelines for final public submissions was extended to 31 July 2020. The ANMF contributed a submission summarising our previous submissions and key recommendations:

- Mandated minimum staffing levels and skills mix
- Legislated requirements for clinical governance, leadership and expertise
- Legislated transparency and accountability measures
- Ensuring workforce capacity and capability and
- Registration for unregulated care workers.

The submission can be found here: <https://bit.ly/anmf-sub-rc-final>

FUTURE HEARINGS

Due to the delay caused by COVID-19 hearings are now scheduled into the latter part of the year. The Commission will hold a hearing from Monday 31 August to Thursday 3 September 2020 in Sydney on key design issues for a new home care system. On Monday 14 September to Tuesday 22 September 2020 the Commission will be inquiring into the financing and sustainability of future improvements to the aged care system, the appropriate funding models to support the delivery of aged care services, and the prudential regulation of aged care providers.