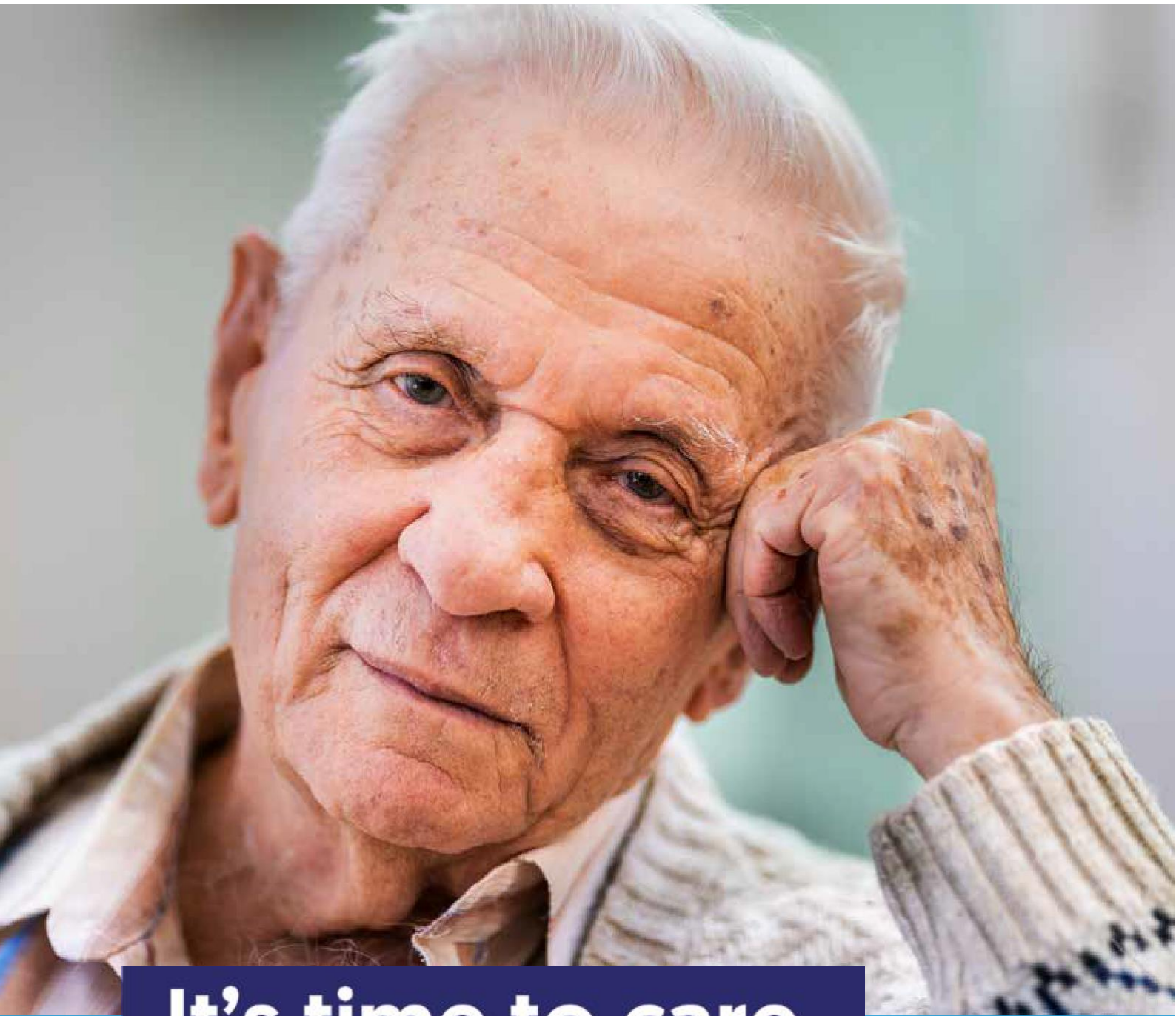




**Australian
Aged Care
Collaboration**



**It's time to care
about aged care.**

Election Statement



A landmark election for aged care

Everyone deserves quality care as they get older but Australians don't yet have the aged care system they deserve. All of us should be able to get quality care, with dignity, when we need it.

We need an aged care system that works for everyone. The Royal Commission exposed long term systemic issues and helped set the standard of reform required. There is unfinished business: big changes are required to ensure the system can deliver for older people, their families, and the workers who care for them.

The Royal Commission's recommendations, if properly implemented and funded, have the potential to drive huge improvements. But even before the crippling COVID-19 pandemic, lack of workforce and serious funding shortfalls meant the sector was limping through a constant state of crisis.

The Australian Aged Care Collaboration represents more than 1,000 organisations. Together, we care for 1.3 million older Australians.

At this election, we are campaigning to urgently address the workforce crisis and for a collaborative commitment to address resource issues in the long term. We are asking all parties and independent candidates to join representatives of older people and their carers, providers, unions, and health professionals in supporting a *National Aged Care Workforce Partnership*.

In line with this Partnership, the AACC is calling for:

1. **A Workforce Partnership Fund** for providers to spend immediately on increasing wages, training, minutes of care, 24-hour nursing and COVID-19 prevention and workforce retention costs.
2. **A minimum wage increase for aged care workers** by funding the Fair Work Commission Work Value Case, and award wage increases from July 2022.
3. **A commitment to a multidisciplinary workforce** by putting in place an allied health needs assessment and funding model by July 2024.

Without immediate changes, the aged care sector won't be able to recover from the current crisis. Quality of care for older Australians will suffer further. It's time to make sure that older Australians get the care they deserve, once and for all.



The staffing crisis

Since the start of the pandemic, aged care workers have gone above and beyond to deliver care. They have been on the frontline of the response, keeping people as safe as they could in uncertain times. They should be getting the pay they deserve and career certainty. The Royal Commission recognised this. It called for higher wages, better qualifications, and more time for workers to spend with older people.

But when the Government responded to the Royal Commission, it did not adequately address the workforce pressures. Workers – and the people they care for – are paying the price. Heavier workloads and limited time are exhausting for staff. Unfair pay is forcing them to make difficult decisions, with many leaving aged care altogether.

Fixing the aged care pay gap is the key to solving this crisis. Nurses and carers in aged care are paid much less than if they worked in the disability or health sectors. This is the number one reason that workers give for leaving the sector.

The staffing pressures in aged care have been building for decades. The pandemic has only made them worse, fuelling the crisis. Some older people are being turned away from services because providers do not have enough staff.

In 2020, the average staff turnover rate in residential aged care was 29 percent. It was as high as 34 per cent in home care. In 2021, each resident was losing 26 hours of care a year because of shifts that cannot be filled, and some home care clients had difficulty accessing any services at all.

The funding crisis

Fixing aged care means fixing aged care funding. This is the only way that providers can hire enough staff, invest in quality care for older people, and prepare for what the pandemic throws at us next.

Government funding is nowhere near what is required to implement recommendations of the Royal Commission. With Covid outbreaks and rising costs, the funding crisis is spiralling and a majority of providers are operating at a loss.

The Australian Aged Care Collaboration acknowledges the Government's \$17.7 billion investment in aged care in 2021. But modelling for the Royal Commission shows that this commitment will fall short, especially after so many years of underfunding.

If the Government agrees that quality aged care can only be delivered by a fit-for-purpose workforce, then it must come to the table with the funding to make it happen.

Our plan: A partnership for change

To solve the crisis in aged care, we need to work together. Aged care providers, unions, health professionals, and government need to work with older people, their family and carers to fulfill every older Australian's right to high quality care.

We are calling on all parties and candidates to sign up to the *National Aged Care Workforce Partnership*, including specifically agreeing to:

1. **A Workforce Partnership Supplement** for providers to spend on increasing wages, training, minutes of care, 24-hour nursing and COVID-19 prevention and workforce retention costs.
2. **A minimum wage increase for aged care workers** by funding the Fair Work Commission Work Value Case, and award wage increases from July 2022.
3. **A commitment to a multidisciplinary workforce** by putting in place an allied health needs assessment and funding model by July 2024.

Aged care providers, unions, health professionals, and the groups who represent older people have already signed up to this Partnership. Providers have committed to implementing the Royal Commission's recommendations for quality care as part of that Partnership.

Now we need a Government that will work with us to fund and deliver that care.

Australians have made it clear – they expect quality aged care. The Australian Aged Care Collaboration has heard that call. We are calling on all parties and candidates to join us.

It's time to take action, and care about aged care.

