

Media Release

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PROTECTING OLDER VICTORIANS IN AGED CARE

The Allan Labor Government is protecting Victorians living in aged care – with new legislation that will see only highly qualified health practitioners – like nurses – able to administer certain medications.

The Labor Government has introduced the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment Bill 2025 into the Victorian Parliament to reduce the risk of medicine-related issues in residential aged care.

The change would see only registered and enrolled nurses – or other authorised health professionals such as pharmacists and GPs – able to administer specific medicines and drugs of dependence to aged care residents from 1 July 2026.

This includes drugs such as local anaesthetics, antibiotics, strong, medicines with strict legislative controls including opioid analgesics like pethidine, morphine, oxycodone, benzodiazepines and clinical trial medications.

These changes will make aged care safer by addressing problems highlighted by the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* which found too many residents were given medication unsafely – including without proper oversight, without clinical judgement or sometimes they weren't given their medication at all.

The Bill was developed after extensive consultation with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, unions, peak bodies and providers – including public, private, community, charity, religious and multicultural providers.

The Bill allows for exceptions in emergencies or other unexpected situations where delayed medication could put a resident at risk – giving power to make rules for when the usual requirements do not apply.

The changes won't stop residents from taking their own medication when it's safe to do so and won't affect how medicines are given in other care settings or under the Voluntary Assisted Dying scheme.

The reform will be reviewed after five years to ensure it is working as intended and that providers continue to have the support they need.

Commonwealth reforms have seen pay increases, funding improvements and workforce adjustments with the introduction of Minimum Care Minutes, contributing to improved workforce supply in the sector.

This reform builds on the Labor Government's broader investment into the nursing workforce – including free nursing degrees, Free TAFE for the Diploma of Nursing, new prescribing powers for endorsed midwives, and a 28.4 per cent pay rise for public sector nurses and midwives – to ensure the best care for Victorian families.

Quote attributable to Minister for Ageing Ingrid Stitt

"These changes are about putting the safety of residents first – making sure our older Victorians living in aged care receive the right medication, safely and at the right time, from the right professionals."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"These reforms will ensure that medication in aged care is handled with the same care and clinical oversight you would expect in any hospital or health service across the state."

Quote attributable to ANMF (Victorian Branch) Secretary Maddy Harradence

“Medication administration is a core nursing responsibility and these changes support nurses to work to their full scope – delivering safe, high-quality, person-centred care and improving job satisfaction.”