



Associate to the Hon. Justice Ross AO  
Fair Work Commission  
Level 4, 11 Exhibition Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
[Chambers.ross.j@fwc.gov.au](mailto:Chambers.ross.j@fwc.gov.au)  
[amod@fwc.gov.au](mailto:amod@fwc.gov.au)

**AM2020/99 - Application to vary the Aged Care Award 2010**  
**AM2021/65 – Application to vary the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010**

1. IRT is a not-for-profit, community-owned aged care provider of residential aged care, home care and retirement living services based in Wollongong, NSW.
2. We operate 20 residential aged care facilities, 30 retirement villages and 7 home care hubs in NSW, the ACT and Queensland. Our sites are located in Sydney, on the South Coast of NSW, in Canberra and on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. We provide accommodation and care services to almost 9000 residents and customers each year.
3. We employ more than 2600 people across the organisation:

Full-time	570
Part-time	1760
Casual	290
Residential Aged Care Centres	1800
Home Care	410
Direct care roles	1000
Indirect care roles	700

*Figures as at 30 June 2021*

4. There is no doubt that the value of work performed by our aged care and home care employees has increased over time.
5. The increased life expectancy of older Australians has resulted in residents/customers presenting with more acute care needs, greater levels of frailty and increased co-morbidities.
6. We are seeing a significant increase in the incidence of dementia and mental health issues among our residents/customers.
7. Increasing regulation now requires a vast amount of additional documentation and reporting.

8. Changing resident/customer and family expectations around person-centred care require employees to cater to individual physical, emotional, social and spiritual care needs. This includes catering to the diverse cultural, social and linguistic needs of residents/customers, including but not limited to CALD and LGBTQI residents/customers.
9. Employees need to be more highly skilled to meet these challenges, with additional training required in areas such as dementia, mental health, advanced communication, complaint management and conflict resolution.
10. The increasing prevalence of home care services mean more employees are working with minimal supervision, while the introduction of consumer directed care has resulted in a broader range of tasks.
11. The COVID-19 pandemic has required employees to become proficient in strict infection control procedures on a level not experienced previously, including the wearing of additional PPE and the management of COVID-19 exposures and outbreaks. Employees have also been required to provide additional social support for isolating residents.
12. The increased complexity mentioned above is not limited to personal care workers, it is equally relevant to those providing food, laundry and cleaning services, as well as those providing administrative support.
13. Like many other providers, IRT is finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain employees, resulting in staffing shortages, particularly in regional areas.
14. The low rates of pay in the sector are a primary reason for this – employees can earn significantly more in either the acute health sector or the disability sector, for very similar (and in some cases less demanding) work.
15. Additionally, we regularly have employees leave our employ to earn more money working in the retail and hospitality sectors (supermarkets, home improvement, fast food). Clearly aged care work is more physically and emotionally taxing, but this is not reflected in the current rates of pay.
16. Employees have also endured significant negative media coverage about the sector in recent years, associated with the Aged Care Royal Commission and the COVID-19 pandemic. This negative community sentiment has contributed to employees' feeling of being unappreciated and undervalued.
17. Staff shortages in the sector are also having an impact on existing employees. After 2 years of COVID-19, they are exhausted and disheartened.
18. There is also an additional financial impact on already struggling providers, having to pay overtime rates and agency costs to cover shifts.
19. These challenges will only be exacerbated when the daily minimum direct care and nursing minutes recommended by the Aged Care Royal Commission are implemented.
20. In order to attract and retain the number of skilled workers needed to deliver safe and quality care in the sector, wages must be competitive.

21. While IRT strongly supports increasing minimum wages in the aged care sector, we are not in a financial position to fund such an increase. IRT incurred a \$10m operating loss in FY21, and we are expecting to again make an operating loss in FY22.
22. Therefore, any decision to increase minimum wages in the aged care sector must be fully funded by the Federal Government.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Reid". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Patrick Reid  
IRT Group CEO