

AGED CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY TASKFORCE ONLINE SURVEY

RESPONSE TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. *Why does an aged care workforce strategy matter?*

An aged care workforce strategy matters because, if properly designed and executed, it will contribute to the capacity of aged care providers to attract and retain a sufficient supply of appropriately qualified and motivated employees to meet the increasingly complex care and support needs of Australia's rapidly growing aged population. To be effective, the strategy needs to take into account that aged care will be provided in an increasingly competitive labour market for health and personal and social care skills, together with increasing community expectations about service quality.

A workforce strategy also matters because aged care services are destined to comprise an increasing share of GDP and consume an increasing share of the nation's resources. It is essential that resource utilisation is efficient as possible.

2. *What practical difference do you hope a strategy will make?*

Practical differences that a workforce strategy can make include:

- Education and training bodies will produce graduates who are appropriately skilled to deliver aged care services using best practice procedures and technology, especially with regard to dementia care and end of life care, and are comfortable working in a consumer-focussed culture where responsiveness to consumer preferences is valued.
- To facilitate the above, the strategy will review current processes for ensuring that education and training curricula are in accord with contemporary needs and best practice aged care, and propose arrangements to strengthen these processes.
- It will propose strategies for training, attracting and retaining care workers to work in aged care services in more rural and remote locations.
- It will facilitate the recruitment of overseas care workers in the event of skilled labour shortages resulting from the expected demand from the health, aged care, disability, child care and social service sectors. In particular, it will facilitate recruitment from the source countries of Australia's CALD aged to ensure culturally appropriate care for Australia's ageing CALD communities.

- Identify the policy settings that may need to change to support care workers, such as family leave, allowances and incentives

However, a workforce strategy is not sufficient in itself to ensure successful, efficient and sustainable aged care services. A workforce strategy has to be complemented by financially viable aged care services and a financially sustainable aged care industry that is held in high esteem by the community.

Government regulation is a major determinant of the financial viability of the aged care industry. Hence, government regulation is also a major determinant of the industry's capacity to compete in the labour market, to create attractive workplaces and working conditions, to deliver quality services, and to create and sustain a positive industry reputation in the community with which prospective employees would take pride to be associated.

3. How do you think a strategy can contribute to meeting future needs in aged care?

A key contribution that a workforce strategy can make is to develop a shared understanding across aged care stakeholders – government, education and training institutions, employers, unions and professional associations, and individuals – on roles and responsibilities for ensuring a sufficient supply of appropriately trained and motivated staff to meet the care and support needs of Australia's ageing demography.

A shared understanding would then provide the basis for articulating strategies and actions for each stakeholder group, and for each group to take responsibility for pursuing the strategies relevant to their responsibilities and functions, and to be accountable for their implementation.

4. Tell us what you see as the changes on the horizon that aged care needs to be ready for, and how do you think the workforce strategy can contribute to meeting these future needs (in the context of an ageing population calling on aged care services in a variety of ways)?

The Aged Care Sector Roadmap has articulated a transition towards a more consumer-driven and market-based aged care service industry based on greater consumer choice and control of services they receive and from whom, and greater choice of assistive technologies. To succeed in such a competitive environment, employers will need to develop a workforce that is characterised by a well-developed and dominant service culture where price, value for money and responsiveness to consumer needs and preferences will be paramount considerations in attracting customers.

In turn, these attributes will put a premium on business management skills required to implement costing, pricing, billing and information systems; for communicating with customers; for assessing, understanding and responding to consumer service preferences; for enhancing the service experience for consumers; and fostering innovation in service delivery

to maintain competitiveness. A more competitive service environment will also put a premium on strategy planning and business and financial analysis.

Many of the above skills will need to be drawn from other sectors of the economy that pay higher salaries than the aged care sector.

Increasingly consumers will remain at home with the support of home-based care and support services. The increasing availability of home care packages and the prospect of removing the balance of care ratios will also see innovation in accommodation for older people, generating options in addition to residential care or remaining in the former family home.

Residential aged care, especially in larger population centres, will principally cater for end of life care, complex medical and nursing care, pain management, and residents with dementia combined with cognitive impairment and behavioural challenges. This will have implications for skill levels in aged care services and the interface with the acute sector and primary health care services.

As with other sectors of the economy, aged care will have the opportunity to apply new digital technologies and software to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of aged care services. This requires entrepreneurial management to recognise and to introduce new technology-based applications, and skilled staff to work with the new technologies. The ability of management to apply new technologies will be a measure of the success of an organisation.

The expanding frontier of knowledge for best practice care in areas such as end of life care and dementia care, and the need to apply of new technologies, will require improvements to the current ad hoc arrangements for post entry-level staff training and development.

There will be an increasing number of older people from diverse CALD communities whose care and support needs would be satisfied best by having access to more carers with similar CALD backgrounds.

Increasing concerns about the mental health of older people is likely to generate demand for mental health services in aged care.

The acuity of home care consumers will rise as more people opt for home care, especially if new higher level packages are introduced, therefore creating a need for more infield roles.

5. *Tell us what is working well in the aged care workforce (across the industry, at provider or service level or through place-based initiatives) and where future opportunities lie.*

CHA does not have a comprehensive list of 'successes', but is aware that many providers have developed recruitment, induction and training methods and rostering technology to help them meet their workforce requirements. These providers embrace flexible family friendly work roster arrangements, on-the-job training and staff development, scholarships, traineeship/graduate programs and positive workplace cultures. Running focused campaigns and engagement centres e.g. at shopping centres has helped recruitment. Providers recognise

that good people management and leadership is essential for a successful organisation. This would be expected of employers in all sectors of the economy.

With regard to services for culturally diverse communities, Fronditha Care has demonstrated the effectiveness of sourcing CALD-appropriate staff from migrant source countries to work in aged care services, noting that many older people are more comfortable being cared for in their native culture. Targeting source countries in this way not only adds to workforce supply, but also addresses a gap that cannot be filled satisfactorily locally. The Taskforce should investigate whether there is scope to change current policies so that providers of CALD services can more easily access staff from migrant source countries.

Turning to attracting and retaining staff for services located in communities that are more isolated where housing can be problematic, CHA has noticed that some providers have responded by providing housing assistance. There is a case for such assistance to be provided by government for aged care professionals as a means of attracting skilled staff, especially if done in conjunction with attracting other health professionals to such communities. CHA is aware that incentives are available for health professionals to work in rural communities, which could provide a model for professionals working in aged care.

CHA has also noticed that there are examples of employers located in regions with declining industries having targeted recruitment of people who have been made redundant.

6. *What do you think are the key factors the Taskforce needs to consider to attract and retain staff? You may wish to consider some or all of the following in your response.*

- *Rural, regional and remote*
- *A diverse workforce and diverse consumers*
- *Workforce planning, roles and occupations*
- *Education and training*
- *Right workers with right aptitudes in the right locations*

Key factors that the Taskforce could consider include:

- 1) The capacity of aged care providers to be competitive in the labour market. Capacity can be assessed in terms of managerial capacity to create attractive and satisfying work places and working conditions. It can also be assessed in terms of financial capacity and viability given that revenues relating to providing care are substantially regulated by government.
- 2) The extent to which the aged care sector is perceived positively or negatively in the community, and whether people would take pride in being employed in or associated with the aged care sector.
- 3) The availability, quality and cost of post entry-level training and employee development opportunities, especially as the frontier of best practice is constantly being extended and

people living longer are presenting with conditions that are more complex. Also where responsibility for providing and meeting the cost of post entry-level training needs to be settled so that aged care workers across the country can access post entry-level training.

- 4) The availability and cost of specialist services to support end of life/palliative care and care of people with challenging behaviours.
 - 5) Retraining opportunities and incentives for former employees in declining sectors who have the aptitude for personal care, and whether there are opportunities/incentives for encouraging people who have had a period of informal caring responsibilities into formal care.
 - 6) Whether there is opportunity through incentives to train locals in more rural and remote locations, where under-employment or high unemployment is often the case, as personal care workers.
 - 7) Review current provisions for supporting informal carers, noting that the successful expansion of home care services will depend in large measure on well-supported informal carers.
 - 8) Whether there are generic measures that could be used to attract younger people to work in aged care, especially nursing staff, given the ageing of the current cohort of nurses in aged care.
7. *What areas of knowledge, skills, and capability need to be strengthened within the aged care workforce? You may wish to consider some or all of the following in your response.*
- *Clinical care*
 - *Needs assessment*
 - *Workforce planning*
 - *Business management and leadership*
 - *Risk management*
 - *Care planning*
 - *Dementia*
 - *End of life*
 - *Social care*

Of the above, CHA would emphasise clinical care as more older people are presenting with complex care needs; dementia care; end of life/palliative care; needs assessment; and business and leadership skills.

Other health-related areas that warrant priority in developing the capacity to deliver a rehabilitation/wellness approach, and a review of medication management regulations in order

to extend job roles and competencies, thereby introducing greater workforce flexibility while maintaining standards.

Other areas requiring attention include demand forecasting, business analysis, workforce logistics (e.g. for efficient deployment of home care workers), sales and business development, service innovation and human resource management. As notes earlier, most of these skills are mostly found in higher salary paying sectors of the economy.

8. What do you think is needed to improve and better equip the workforce to meet individual needs and expectations?

Recruitment by employers needs to pay greater attention to assessing aptitude for aged care/personal care work, including having a personality that understands and values a customer-focussed service culture, is responsive to individual choice and decision-making, and recognises the personal autonomy of care recipients to make informed choices that involve a degree of risk.

There is a case for individual seeking access to education and training institutions to be screened in this way also.

9. What is needed for leadership, mindset and accountability to innovate and extend new ways of working tailored to the needs of older people who use aged care services, their families, carers and communities?

Fundamentally, what is needed is a well-resourced, financially viable and respected aged care industry that has the capacity to attract quality leaders and managers:

- with imagination and incentive to think outside the box,
- having the courage to experiment and innovate with different services and different ways of delivering the services, including the use of technology, and
- who bring a customer-focused service culture to the business, including a service culture that is responsive to the changing needs and wishes of consumers and is continually receiving and evaluating feedback and moderating and adjusting accordingly.

As well as being well resourced, the aged care sector operating and business environment should be less regulated and more competitive so that management is more sensitive and responsive to satisfying the needs and wishes of consumers, but still operating within a quality framework and delivering high quality services.

10. What should aged care providers consider with workforce planning? You may wish to consider some or all of the following in your response.

This is best considered under two dimensions – what individual providers can do and what providers can do collectively.

- *Workforce size and structure*
- *Managing growth and change in service requirements*
- *Mix of occupations*
- *Workforce roles*
- *Distinct workforce needs in different workforce settings*

Workforce planning by consumers would need to take into account all of the above.

In addition, would take into account the role of agency staff, negotiating and setting working conditions and remuneration levels that ensures competitiveness in the labour market, the capacity of staff to work across multiple sites and settings, whether traditional roles can be made more flexible with appropriate training and job re-design, and the role of and support for volunteers.

As would be the case in any business, people management and creating an attractive working environment is the responsibility of employers. Most employers would see success in this regard as fundamental to their competitive edge and the success of their overall business. For many, the method they each use to create attractive working environments and conditions for attracting and retaining excellent staff is a key part of their intellectual capital. It is not something that can be arranged for them by government.

As a group, there is scope for employers to work with education and training bodies to ensure that their graduates are job-ready and possess skills and competencies that are comprehensive and up to date with contemporary best practice.

It should be noted, however, that the largely generic training received by graduates, especially entry-level training, equip them to work in many sectors. Attracting graduates to aged care is therefore a further step in the 'supply chain', and one that is subject to a range of factors such as perceived opportunities for career progression, job designs that make work satisfying, the esteem with which the sector is held in the community, and the quality of the experience from any work placements.

11. In undertaking its work, the Taskforce has been asked to have regard to recent submissions and reports of relevant inquiries on aged care workforce matters, and government responses. If you want the Taskforce to draw on a submission you have made, or evidence or materials you want to draw to our attention, please provide details in the text box below.

The Taskforce may wish to consider the following workforce-related papers prepared by Catholic Health Australia:

- 1) Perspectives on an Aged Care Workforce (Aged Care Update , April 2016)

[https://www.cha.org.au/images/M_images/AgedCareUpdate - 040416.pdf](https://www.cha.org.au/images/M_images/AgedCareUpdate_-_040416.pdf)

- 2) Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee Inquiry into the Future of Australia's Aged Care Workforce (March 2016)

[https://www.cha.org.au/images/Catholic Health Australia Submission to Senate Community Affairs Committees Inquiry into the Aged Care Workforce.pdf](https://www.cha.org.au/images/Catholic_Health_Australia_Submission_to_Senate_Community_Affairs_Committees_Inquiry_into_the_Aged_Care_Workforce.pdf)

12. Is there anything else that you would like to contribute to inform the Taskforce? Please contribute using the text box below. Alternatively using the link below, add an attachment in Word or PDF to express your views or ideas more appropriately.

Nothing further to add.

Catholic Health Australia
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