

Priority 3: Mobilising the workforce

Delivering quality aged care services to older Australians requires qualified and committed staff.

It's not just about increasing the number of home care packages, it's also about having an adequate supply of workers to meet demand.

That is why National Seniors Australia is recommending a national mature age traineeship program to attract quality mature age home care workers.

Aside from the need to pay aged care workers more, government must also address the level of support and recognition provided to aged care workers.

Increasing worker satisfaction can be achieved by improving the quality of training provided to them and by ensuring they are adequately supported by management.

Key Recommendations

5. Provide 2,000 mature age home care traineeships per year to help meet demand for workers
6. Rejuvenate quality, industry-wide training that emphasises management support and worker satisfaction.



RECOMMENDATION 5

Provide 2,000 mature age home care traineeships per year to help meet demand

Overview

- Create a targeted home care traineeship program for mature workers aged 50+ to meet the cost of training.
- The program would be based on the successful South Australian pilot traineeship scheme, which links older workers with a home care provider.^{vii}

Benefits

- Meets the growing shortfall for home care workers.
- Encourages people to work in home care.
- Provides greater income and superannuation for older people, particularly women.
- Provides care recipients with access to mature and sympathetic workers – as is their preference.

Why the program is needed

- Evidence from the existing pilot (run by provider My Care Solution) shows home care recipients and home care providers prefer mature aged workers.

“At My Care Solution, more than 85 per cent of our workforce is aged 45 or older. They are committed, reliable, eager to learn, and most importantly, they are compatible with our elderly clients.”

Mark McBriarty, My Care Solution

- Demand for care workers is growing rapidly – CEDA estimates a shortfall of 400,000 workers by 2050.^{viii}
- Mature aged workers are in demand in home care – The average worker age in community care is 50.^{ix}
- Mature aged workers are not being adequately serviced by existing training programs – The existing Restart program is a failure with limited take-up of its \$10,000 subsidies.
- There’s a large number of older people who are not counted in the unemployment figures but want to work – According to the ABS in 2018-19, there were 233,000 people aged 50 - 69 who were not unemployed but want to work either full or part time (they are not in the labour force, not retired and not currently employed).
- The ratio of workers to retirees is declining – The old age dependency ratio (of working-age people to those over 65) is projected to fall from 4:1 in 2019-20 to 2.7:1 in 2060-61.

Budget Implications

- The cost of the South Australian pilot was \$10,000 per trainee for training, uniforms, police clearances, tech support and non-accredited training i.e. orientation – This could be met by redirecting funds from the existing *Restart* program (funded at \$108.8m in 2017-18).
 - 2,000 traineeships would cost \$20 million per year or \$80 million over the forward estimates for 8,000 new home care workers.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Rejuvenate quality, industry-wide training that emphasises management support and worker satisfaction.

Overview

- Worker satisfaction must be centred in the future culture of the aged care industry if we are to retain and attract workers.
- Lessons from the past few years with the advent of Consumer Directed Care in the 2010s tells us change must be led by management with a commitment to supporting workers.
- All aged care workers also need quality training if they are to feel that their work is valued by society.
- New workers should be carefully vetted before undergoing training to ensure that suitable workers are attracted to the sector – suitable workers will be more comfortable and satisfied, leading to higher retention and lower attrition.

Benefits

- Providing adequate training and management support to aged care workers will boost job satisfaction enabling providers to attract and retain staff.

Why the policy is needed

- Poor management and inadequate career advancement are some of the more frequently cited motivations for leaving the aged care sector
- Retaining and expanding the aged care workforce requires quality training and adequate support for workers from management structures.
- National Seniors surveys for the Aged Care Workforce Strategy found care recipients frequently had issues with poor management from the levels above, not with their personal care provider.
- There is a need for significant upskilling to meet emerging requirements of home and residential care.
- Client centred care requires internal education and training from the top down including the Board so financial matters don't dominate.