

## Australia's ACE Sector Ready to Assist Growth in Aged Care Workforce

Community Colleges Australia news item, 13 May 2021; see <https://cca.edu.au/australias-ace-sector-ready-to-assist-growth-in-aged-care-workforce/>

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Australia's adult and community education (ACE) providers are poised and ready to work with Commonwealth and state governments to help expand and train new workers.

### Budget Aged Care Workforce Commitment

This week's Commonwealth Budget promised a [\\$652 million workforce strategy](#) that includes upskilling of the existing workforce, and subsidised training for 33,800 new aged care workers at Certificate III level through an expanded JobTrainer. The home care workforce will also expand by 18,000 new workers, funded by an extra \$91.8 million.

[The Budget papers read:](#) "In response to the Aged Care Royal Commission, the Australian Government is investing \$338.5 million over three years to grow, train and upskill the aged care workforce to drive improvements to the safety and quality of care experienced by senior Australians. The aged care workforce is central to the quality of aged care in Australia."

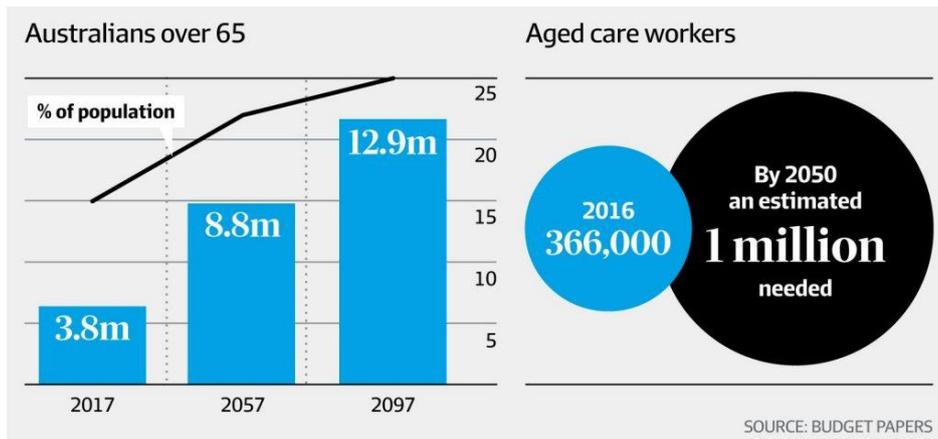
"Personal care workers already working within the aged care sector will also be encouraged to have their experience recognised, increase their skills and fill any knowledge gaps through undertaking the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) and other training and professional development opportunities."

Unfortunately, the Government has only said it will give "further consideration" at this stage to an Aged Care Royal Commission recommendation for mandatory minimum qualifications for personal care workers.

The budget commits \$17.7 billion in new funds over the next five years to aged care, although the [Grattan Institute](#) and others have estimated the costs of implementing the Royal Commission recommendations at around \$10 billion per annum – more like \$50 billion.

### One Million Workers by 2050

It [is anticipated](#) that Australia will need [one million workers](#) by 2050 to service 8.5 million older Australians (see graphic below from the [Australian Financial Review](#)). "This is a massive staffing increase," said Dr Don Perlgut, CEO of Community Colleges Australia (CCA).



(image source: [Australian Financial Review](#))

## Australian Adult and Community Education (ACE) Providers

Almost every CCA member has the Certificate III Individual Support (Ageing) “on scope” for training. Nationally, Australia’s ACE sector plays an extremely important role in training of aged care workers: ACE providers train 13% of government-funded care (Individual Support) learners and 10% of all care students (2019 enrolments). Government-funded care learner percentages rise to a high of 23% in NSW and 19% in Victoria.

“This is particularly important, given the Budget announcement of an additional 33,800 aged care workers to be trained [with government subsidies through JobTrainer](#). To make this training roll-out a success, ACE providers need to play a major part. ACE providers also play a crucial role in training disadvantaged learners, including people with disabilities, Indigenous Australians, residents of regional and rural areas, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds,” said Dr Perlgut.

[Read CCA’s overall analysis of the Commonwealth Budget.](#)

## CCA’s National ACE Summit

CCA’s [National 2021 ACE Summit](#) – in Sydney and online, 29 June 2021 – will broaden the knowledge of the national ACE sector, and showcase its community-based, innovative programs and pathways that can help governments succeed in meeting Australia’s economic, employment and social challenges in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic-induced recession. The aged care workforce will be one of the two focus areas of the Summit, along [foundation skills](#).



## OTHER AGED CARE WORKFORCE BUDGET COMMENTS

### Gender Equity

The increase in aged care funded training assists the Government in promoting gender equity through the Budget: “Women use more aged care services than men, largely because they live longer on average (about two-thirds of recipients of aged care services are women); the aged care workforce is dominated by female employees; and women tend to do more unpaid elder care than men and those carers stand to benefit from improved aged care services,” [writes Matt Wade](#). It is less certain that the Budget will assist pay conditions for the female-dominated aged care workforce, which is essential to recruit and retain good staff.

### The Government Has Not Gone Far Enough

“The Government has not gone far enough in supporting the workforce. It stopped short of guaranteeing that every staff member providing care for older Australians will be trained to a minimum Certificate III level, and that all residential aged-care facilities will have a registered nurse on site 24 hours a day. The budget commitments appear to be a once-off, with workforce funding plummeting to only A\$86.5 million in 2024-25, compared to A\$293.3 million in 2022-23. And there is no commitment to lift carers’ wages,” write Stephen Duckett and Anika Stobart in [The Conversation](#).

Ross Gittins ([Sydney Morning Herald](#)) also believes the Government should have gone further.

### Migrants and the Aged Care Workforce

In 2016, 37.1% of Australia’s 295,324 front-line care workers [were born overseas](#) – a dramatic increase over 2011, and almost 90% were women. The migrant percentage is certainly higher now, but what happens when our migration has slowed to almost zero; where will this workforce expansion come from in the next few years?

(image below sourced from [Aged and Community Services Australia](#))

