

Summit Focus Area: Aged Care Workforce – for Community Colleges Australia National Summit, 29 June 2021

Proposed Resolution

On behalf of Australia’s adult and community education (ACE) sector, CCA proposes to engage with the Commonwealth and the states to implement the additional aged care training places announced in the 2021 Commonwealth Budget as a sound avenue to urgently address the recruitment, skills gap and shortage of workers in our aged care sector.

Summit participants propose a joint community education provider/government aged care service initiative to ensure Australia’s not-for-profit ACE providers be provided with the capability and opportunity to assist in the rapid upskilling and expansion of the nation’s aged care workforce. Commonwealth and state governments – especially in, but not limited to New South Wales and Victoria – to fund the development and trialling of a transferable and accessible skills recognition model, initially for Certificate III Individual Support and Certificate IV in Ageing. This needs to include a quality measurement model designed cooperatively to ensure funding is well-directed.

The Commonwealth Budget announced additional 33,800 aged care workers to be trained with government subsidies through JobTrainer.¹ ACE providers are in a strong position to recruit and train – to the highest quality – at least 6,000 of these workers, if given proper assistance and support.

The Role for the Adult and Community Education Sector

Australian ACE providers:

- Constitute an important part of the nation’s aged care training infrastructure: 23% of New South Wales, 19% of Victorian (and 13% nationally) of government-funded VET students in the Certificate III (Individual Support) and Certificate IV (Ageing Support) study with an ACE provider. Community providers trained a total of 8,435 students in these qualifications in 2019 (NCVER 2020).
- Specialise in delivering the Certificate III Individual Support, which trains students for work in the aged care sector and is the most popular training package for ACE provider students nationally, with more than one-third of ACE students enrolled in this qualification. For instance, almost every CCA member delivers the Certificate III Individual Support (Ageing).
- Over-perform in engaging vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and individuals in education and training programs, including people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with a disability, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds,

¹ See <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/177-billion-to-deliver-once-in-a-generation-change-to-aged-care-in-australia>.

Indigenous Australians and regional/rural residents, proportionately far more than TAFEs and for-profit VET providers. ACE providers also reach more women and older workers. Recruitment of workers from these groups will be an essential part of expansion of the national aged care workforce.

- Play a crucial role in meeting the needs of the aged care workforce, both now and in the future, to address the recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission. ACE provider training is place-based, connected to local communities and local service providers, and receives extremely high marks for the quality and student job-readiness, because of the consistent training quality.

The 2021 Commonwealth Budget states: “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.”² Thus, the recruitment of new and qualified workers into the aged care sector needs to be matched with the skills upgrading of existing workers.

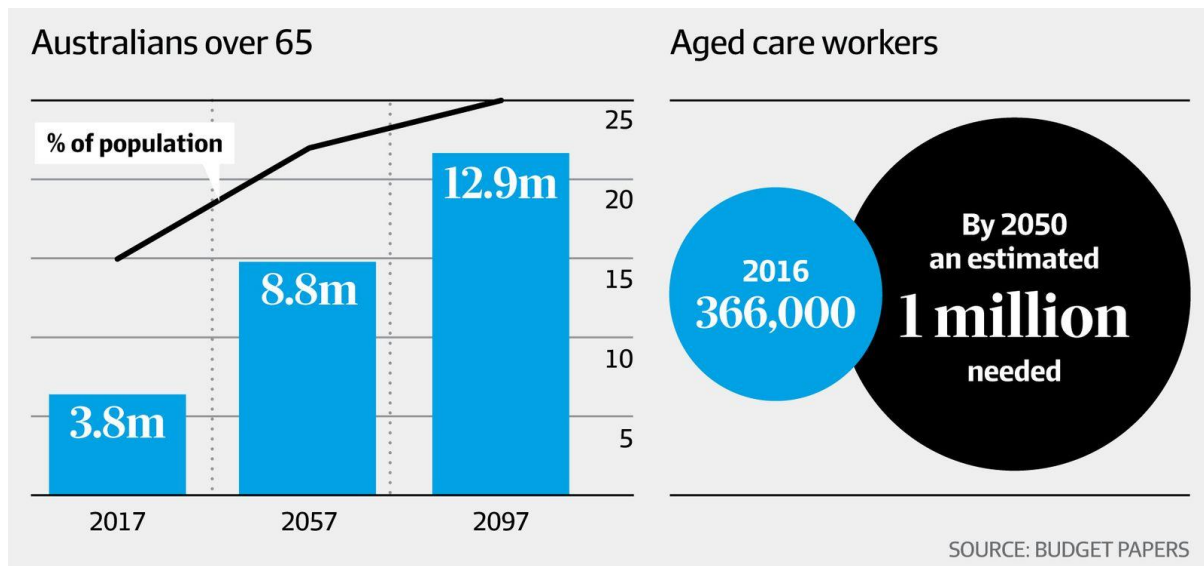
Background and Discussion

The Australian aged care industry is fragmented, made up predominantly of small to medium enterprises spread across community, home, and residential care settings, served by government, not-for-profit (many faith-based) and for-profit providers. There are numerous provider workforce training initiatives underway, particularly in larger not-for-profit providers, that work to deliver high quality appropriate and inclusive care to their clients with a skilled and satisfied workforce.

The gap between supply and demand for aged care workers is wide. The Royal Commission into Aged Care reported an estimated need for more than 130,000 additional, full-time equivalent workers by 2050 - a 70% increase on current levels.³ This gap is expected to widen.

² See <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/05/workforce-pillar-4-of-the-royal-commission-response-growing-a-skilled-and-high-quality-workforce-to-care-for-senior-australians.pdf>, p. 2.

³ See <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/final-report-executive-summary.pdf>, p. 125.



(image above from the *Australian Financial Review*)

A move to a national registration scheme (recommendation 79) and a minimum Certificate III qualification, while still being considered, may further exacerbate this gap.

The sector relies heavily on an international and migrant workforce. Workers also have concerns over job and income security and are employed by multiple providers. COVID-19 implications mean there are not fresh inflows of workers from overseas and the completion of work placements have been prevented or delayed. “Rapid response” skillsets delivered to ease shortages have not considered the suitability of applicants. Remuneration is poor in the sector, and many workers report stressful working conditions.

Many workers within the aged care system do not possess relevant industry qualifications. Their futures may be uncertain and/or their skills may be lost or underutilised.

There is a critical and growing shortage of workers in the aged care industry. Industry workforce planning and management systems are often poor. Student work placement ‘flows’ into aged providers are often not well managed. Skilled aged care trainers are in critical short supply nationally: Existing workers are often reluctant to move into the training sphere. The required TAE Certificate IV qualification is also seen as an obstacle. Negative press around the quality of care, and qualifications of staff compounds this issue. Candidates are often inappropriately screened or prepared for industry roles, leading to dissatisfied employers and jobseekers. The availability of training places and the pressure on jobseekers leads to a degree of training delivery and placement that does not suit either the jobseeker or the service.

The aged care sector faces key skill-mix and capability gaps, along with poor mobility and career pathways. This applies across job roles and is not confined to care workers.

High Language Literacy Numeracy (LLN) & Digital Literacy (DL) concerns both the prospective and the existing aged care workforce. There is limited funding and/or the will to effectively address these concerns from both service provider and individual perspectives. This significantly impacts the available pool of workers and the capacity to upskill some existing workers. Aged

care training providers are required to apply literacy or numeracy proficiency requirements at enrolment/graduation. The level required for Certificate III Individual Support forms a barrier to new enrolments, particularly students from the CALD backgrounds and low literacy level native English speaker students. Solutions vary depending on the learner cohort.

It is crucial that quality education providers and the industry work together to stop the proliferation of poorly trained and mismatched sector entrants and workers.

Recommended approach

1. Grow delivery and develop innovative pathways for potential learners in partnership with allied service providers. Explore new approaches. Ensure better screening of potential entrants. Promote pathway opportunities within a community context. For example, establish a program with migrant women in low SES areas, customised collaborations between aged providers and ACE providers. Lift collaboration and communication between providers and services. Promote and grow taster programs for potential aged care workers in partnership. Develop narratives and pathways for the diverse student cohorts and entry points.
2. Collate existing examples; develop and trial training or upskilling based on relational model of care: in conjunction with service providers, aged care provider member bodies, industry skills organisations and ACE providers.
3. Develop and implement effective holistic skills recognition processes for Aged Care workers to recognise and build existing worker skills more effectively. There are available models that can be customised, trialled and implemented with development support.
4. Build better choice, selection, and range of options for both students and service providers: Work with Aged Care providers, sector groups and Service Skills Organisations to trial options including skill sets.
5. Urgently review approaches to engage and retain skilled trainers, including government incentives, particularly in regional areas.
6. Work with relevant advisory bodies to develop a detailed and unambiguous voluntary code or system for trainers to demonstrate excellence.
7. Develop, implement, and roll out a contextualised Language Literacy and Numeracy program for Aged Care workers and for prospective workers. Community education providers work with service providers to implement models of embedded LLN support which are learner cohort specific, i.e., CALD and native English speakers. Government support, across jurisdictional levels, is requested.
8. Embed skills development pathways. Develop an accessible model of recognition and mentoring support to develop nurse and care worker skills and confidence.
9. Refine/further develop mentoring model for developing supervisor skills and confidence. First level outcome: reliable third-party workplace evidence. Provide supervisor training and a recognition model. Roll out mentoring to support developing trainer skill. Apply enterprise trainer skill set as an interim step.

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