

THE FUTURE SUPPLY OF CAREGIVERS FOR THE ELDERLY

LHMU

LHMU coverage

LHMU is a major Aged Care Union with coverage across the states and territories, in residential and home care, covering;

- ▣ Enrolled nurses
- ▣ Nursing assistants
- ▣ Personal carers
- ▣ Physio assistants
- ▣ Chefs/cooks/general kitchen
- ▣ Drivers/gardeners/maintenance staff

Current Workforce

All following data is from *Who Cares for Older Australians. A Picture of the Residential and Community Aged Care Workforce 2007*.
National Institute of Labour Studies. October 2008

- 93% of residential and 91% of community based workers are female
- Only 9.1% are permanent full time (68.6% permanent part time and 22.3% casual)
- 37% would like to work more hours than currently
- 60% are aged over 45 years
- 89.3% have school qualifications at year 10 or higher and 80% have post school qualifications (mainly certificate III in aged care)

Current Workforce

- 63.7% earn between \$500 and \$1 000 per week. The only significant numbers earning above that are nurses at 24.4% (doesn't distinguish between enrolled and registered nurses)
- 48.5% of all direct care workers had previously worked in paid aged care jobs prior to current job
- 28.4% begin working in aged care at age 30-39 and 27% at age 40 to 49

Work environment – how aged care workers feel about their jobs

- 53% felt they were not able to spend enough time with each resident
- 38% felt under pressure to work harder
- 33% felt their job was more stressful than they had imagined
- 94% felt they had the skills to do their jobs
- Job satisfaction is generally high across most areas except for wages, where most were dissatisfied

Future issues – need for aged care

- Aging population – the proportion of Australians 65 or over will double in the next 50 years, from 13% in 2007 to between 23%-25% in 2056. The proportion aged over 85 will increase from 2% to between 5%-7% in the same period.
- Declining proportion of population in working life age group of 18 - 65

Future issues - workforce

- Ageing workforce – 60% over 40 and 13.5% over 55 (compared with 37% of all women workers)
- High turnover rate of 25% per annum
- Low retention rate – only 28% of direct care staff staying at one place of employment for more than 6 years
- Low wage sector
- Low hours – many workers are underemployed supplementing income by working via labour hire companies

Fixes

□ Wages

- *“The LHMU also has the privilege of negotiating on behalf of staff at the Perth Zoo. A zookeeper under the EBA that we have negotiated with the state government gets \$27, almost \$28, an hour. I do not provide that just for a bit of humour: it is serious. This is what we pay people to care for animals at the Perth Zoo. What we pay staff to care for the elderly is significantly less. You have to ask yourself, What does that say about the value that we attribute not only to staff but to the elderly”*
- *We ask our members. ‘Would you advise your son or your daughter into aged care?’ and they just say. ‘No, because the money is not there. The hours are not there. You are better off getting a job at Coles or Woolworths. The money is just as good , and the work is nowhere near as difficult*
– David Kelly WA Branch Secretary

□ Training

- real links between qualifications, on going training and rates of pay – develops career structures and improves retention – increasing roles come with increased responsibilities – need adequate funding for ongoing training

“The training has been upskilled but the workload has got heavier and heavier...so you are upskilling them but giving extra workload but no extra staff” –Margaret Roberts member WA

□ Ratios

■ Minimum staff to resident ratios

- Between 2003 and 2007 aged care places increased by 12.5%, residents needing high care increased 4.5% yet FTE direct care staff increased only 11%. US research shows strong links between increased ratios and reduction of quality of care problems

“I just want to tell you that we are always understaffed and the workload is terrible. You have got 12 residents. You have got to do the medication, plus do your showers, do the breakfast. You might have to bring them up tea – a thousand jobs you have to do: get the clothes from the laundry, plus having to be cutting nails, heat packs. It goes on and on. Its like a conveyer belt. I am sorry , but that’s what it is, because you do not have time to sit with this resident for 25 minutes. You just do not have the time. It is just terrible.” – Carol Harrison LHMU member WA

Funding

- No ties to wages. Increased funding does not necessarily flow to wages unless required to do so
 - ie 02/03, \$211 mil over 4 years; 04/05 Conditional Adjustment Payment of \$877.8 mil over 4 years; 04/05 \$21 mil over 4 years in Support for Aged Care Workers Program. Despite all being incentives to enable more competitive wages there has been no real increase in wages and aged care remains lowest paid of health care sector.
 - Benchmarks of minimum wage
 - Dedicated funding to those meeting guidelines

Funding

- Indexation – Commonwealth Own Purpose Outlays Index (sum of 75% Fair Pay increase to FMW and 25% march CPI)
 - Anticipated 2010/2011 increase of 0.44%
 - Between 1997 and 2009 there have been only 4 instances where COPO index is equal to or greater than CPI – failure to fully index has resulted in downward pressure on wage levels

Migration as a solution?

- Need to fix current workforce issues and make good jobs that attract and retain local workforce first
- *“Overseas workers should not be seen as a long term solution to the workforce dilemmas.industry resource needs to continue efforts to attract more local workers into the aged care sector, remove pay differentials...,improve training, develop career paths, promote innovation and efficiencies to lighten workloads, encourage family friendly work environments and develop our leaders. “*

Aged and Community Services Australia – Overseas Workers for the Aged Care Sector. Scoping Paper June 2008

migration

- Reliance on migration to address shortages can reflect reluctance of employers to provide wages and conditions to attract locally skilled employees – migration can provide an attractive option for some employers to
 - avoid paying what the domestic market would otherwise dictate
 - Invest in training and other labour market strategies

migration

- any migration program has to contain
 - Conditions that employers must continue to work to improving their capacity to compete in local labour market
 - Strict regulation and an effective and enforceable monitoring system
 - Protections that provide equal conditions and wages to those of local employees

Migration – case study

LHMU QLD branch as recently reached agreement with QLD Health to address labour shortages in radiographers skilled in mammograms. This will involve bringing in overseas workers in the short term, properly paid and skilled, coupled with a plan to develop the local workforce. Thus over time reducing the reliance on an overseas workforce and providing new opportunities for local workers

migration

- Labour mobility schemes
 - Separate to any free trade agreements
 - Labour markets too volatile
 - Labour mobility schemes generally not long term/sustainable
 - Linked to training and real skill acquisition
 - Workers must be able to acquire real skills that can be utilised at home
 - And must not be rewards for industries that fail to develop sustainable labour markets

migration

- Regulated and monitored to prevent abuse
 - Employers must employ worker in accordance with relevant industrial instrument
 - Industry must continue to work to develop ongoing labour market strategies
 - Workers provided with English language training where necessary
 - Government established fair and efficient system to transmit remittances
 - Clear identification of work sites and unions provided with access to induction
 - Workers employed in an area leading to quantifiable skills development

migration

- Not used as safety valve to prop up Australian industries that have failed to develop sustainable labour markets
- Social implications recognised/addressed
 - Issues related to dislocation and family upheaval must be addressed through education and support services
 - Social impact assessments and public interest tests for region receiving worker and region losing workers
 - Education for the broader Australian community