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HESTA research indicates a potential shortfall of 80,000 workers in the Aged Care industry

Landmark HESTA research drawing on it's more than 200,000 members working in aged care reveals a sector facing significant challenges in attracting and retaining workers to the rapidly changing industry.

Launching its report, *Transforming Aged Care – reimagining the aged care workforce of tomorrow*, HESTA CEO, Debby Blakey, said the research found more than 23% of aged care workers surveyed intend on leaving the sector in one to five years.

This is equivalent to 84,000 employees within the aged care workforce (currently approximately 366,000[^]). Research outlined in the report also shows only 4,000 workers are expected to enter the sector from other areas of health and community services (HACS), meaning aged care faces a potential net outflow of 80,000 employees in the next five years.

"We share the belief of many in the sector that meeting the expected increase in demand for aged care will require a focus on the people who deliver these critical services," Ms Blakey said.

"Our research identifies a worrying potential outflow of workers from aged care in the next five years, right as we need to be attracting significantly more people to work in the sector."

The Productivity Commission forecasts that Australia may need almost one million aged care workers by 2050, if it's to meet the forecast demand from aging baby boomers*.

Ms Blakey said, while the research shone a spotlight on the job intentions of the sector, it also revealed the strong personal and professional commitment of those working in aged care.

Among aged care employees, 77% of those surveyed intend working in the sector for the long-term.

"Aged care employees spoke of how rewarding they found caring for Australia's elders — of special moments shared, of wanting to make a difference, or simply the power of being there to listen," Ms Blakey said.

"They told us of their deep commitment to the physical and emotional wellbeing of those they cared for. It's this human connection that lies at the heart of retaining valuable, experienced employees and attracting the new entrants to the industry."

The two-year research project drew on discussions with peak bodies, unions, service providers and employees from across the country. Independent researchers surveyed more than 2,000 HACS employees, including more than 500 from aged care. Researchers explored their broader working context, including number of employers, hours of paid and unpaid work, and career plans.

HESTA was also able to contrast findings in aged care with data and research drawn from its more than 840,000 members working in the broader HACS sector.

"As the major national industry super fund for HACS, we want to provide insights from our data and research capabilities that can help facilitate practical solutions to key challenges facing the sector," Ms Blakey said.

"Ensuring we have the skilled workforce necessary to care for Australia's elders is an issue that will affect millions of Australians.

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“But it will also directly impact our members working to deliver services across both aged care and the broader HACS sector.”

The research identified key changes impacting the aged care industry and its day-to-day operations:

- societal and demographic changes mean dementia care is now a core business
- a shift towards greater consumer-directed care, means greater choice and changing care models requiring new skills and closer collaboration with other service providers
- increased physical demands of aged care work and time pressures on employees
- the most common reasons for aged care workers wanting to leave the industry are:
 - develop new skills (49%)
 - try something different (38%)
 - not paid enough (22%).

“This is clearly an industry on the cusp of significant reform which will shape, for years to come, the provision of care to millions of Australians,” said Ms Blakey.

“Aged care providers are adapting their business models and switching to more service-oriented approaches to attract and retain clients.”

Employers and employees nominated well-structured and consistent job training and career pathways as key to attracting and retaining staff.

“The research highlights lots of positive solution-led suggestions from employers and employees,” said Ms Blakey.

“Better working conditions and greater employee recognition are likely to make a big difference to job satisfaction and employee engagement.

“Employees also told us they want more time to care for clients and to cut through some of the red tape that surrounds their roles.”

Employers also identified a raft of proactive solutions to strengthen Australia’s aged care sector, including:

- recruiting new talent from allied industries such as hospitality and retail
- creating stronger employment brands
- flexible rosters and greater certainty of hours for employees
- ‘staying on’ programs supporting retention of experienced, older employees
- attracting millennials to work in aged care by promoting technological innovation in robotics and AI, as well as opportunities to assist increasingly tech-savvy baby boomer clients.

^The Aged Care Workforce 2016, Australian Government Department of Health, March 2017. This is an estimate of all PAYG aged care workers, including those in residential facilities, home care and home support outlets.

**Productivity Commission (2011) Caring for Older Australians Inquiry Final Report*

HESTA

HESTA is an industry superannuation fund dedicated to those working in the Health and Community Services Sector. HESTA has over 840,000 members and manages more than \$43 billion of members’ assets

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