

The Aged Care Census Database

Insight #3: Retention in Aged Care

The top reasons why people stay working in Aged Care are extensively people-related.



... And the sector as a whole has been increasingly successful over the last 10 years at retaining people who are seen by their work colleagues as "quality staff"...

The organisation retains quality staff

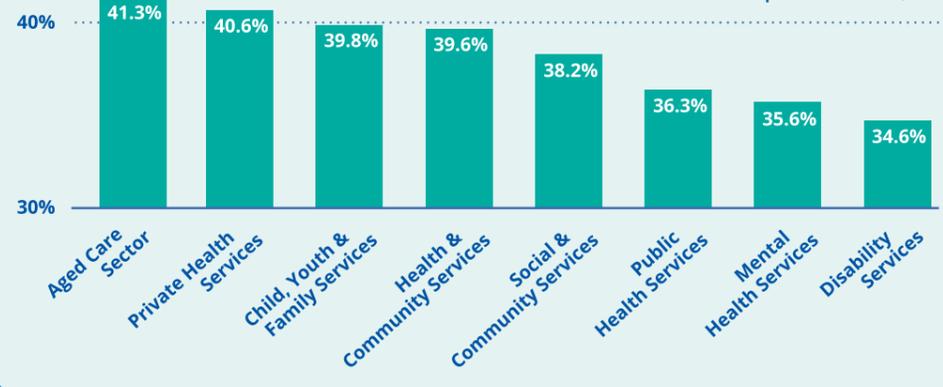
Aged Care Respondents: 57,612



... And its 10 year average of 41.3% is leading many other Health and Community sectors on this metric.

The organisation retains quality staff

Respondents: 204,914



Analysis of the insight

The aged care sector has become known for its high turnover of staff, which has been sitting around 25% over the last decade.¹ The average turnover rate across all industries in Australia was 8.5% in 2019.²

The Aged Care Census Database (ACCD) shows that on average between 2017-19 over 45% of aged care workers believed their sector was successful at retaining quality staff. This has been a gradually improving trend from a low of around 34% at the beginning of the decade. With an additional 12% of staff considering their colleagues to be 'quality' by the end of the decade, providers are clearly getting better at keeping the right people in the right jobs.

Taken on average over the decade, this puts aged care ahead of all other care sectors in terms of workers believing quality staff are being retained. Although, there are still a significant number of workers (more than half) who think that quality staff are being lost.

So, what can you as a provider do about it?

- In 2017, many employers reported implementing their own strategies to encourage staff to stay, including providing staff flexible hours (76%), while 74% provided training and development opportunities, and some 47% of employers also converted staff to ongoing contracts where possible.³

Other options to consider are:

- Modifying workloads:** Excessive workloads are a factor hindering efforts to recruit and retain staff.⁴
- Offering opportunities:** Witnesses at and submissions to the Royal Commission's hearings saw career development and progression opportunities as central to improving attraction and retention in the sector.
- Creating a supportive organisational culture:** 2017 HESTA research found that a simple and inexpensive worker acknowledgement program could be constructive. Aged care employees invest 'a great deal of time and effort in the job, often going well beyond the minimum required'.⁵
- Running effective induction programs:** UK-based author of Saving Social Care, Neil Eastwood, points to an effective induction program as a key tool in worker retention: "The early period of a care worker's life in an aged care organisation is the most important period to improve long-term retention".⁶

1. Hodgkin, S. Warburton, J. Savy, P. and Moore, M. (2017) Workforce Crisis in Residential Aged Care: Insights from Rural, Older Workers, Australian Journal of Public Administration vol 76, no 1, pg 94.

2. ABS (February 2019) Participation, Job Search and Mobility. Accessible at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia/feb-2019>

3. Australian Government (2011) Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), Personal Care Workers Survey 2008 referred to on page 19 of DEEWR's Profile of the Aged Care Workforce presentation to the Aged Care Sector Forum, Central Coast-Hunter region, February 2012 accessible at <https://www.dese.gov.au/uncategorised/resources/profile-aged-care-workforce>

4. Meissner E, Radford K. (2015) Importance and Performance of Managerial Skills in the Australian Aged Care Sector - A Middle Managers' Perspective. J Nursing Management. 2015 Sep;23(6):pp 784-93.

5. HESTA (2017) Transforming Aged Care: Reimagining the Aged Care Workforce of Tomorrow, p23 accessible at <https://www.hesta.com.au/transformingagedcare>

6. Australian Ageing Agenda (2018) Work-life Balance Key to Retaining Aged Care Staff, 30 October 2018. Interview by Sandy Cheu accessible at <https://www.australianageingagenda.com.au/executive/work-life-balance-key-to-retaining-aged-care-staff/>