

NSW Human Services Workforce Online Forum – Summary

Organised by the Human Services Skills Organisation (HSSO)

14 October 2021

After the consultation-what are the next steps? How can service providers engage with HSSO and shape future policy- What happens to the data, information, knowledge and experiences that are collected. How would that information be used, where will this information go?

- HSSO regularly consulted to give a range of information about what happens next.
- As HSSO build their body of work their intention is to have an extended network of partners, communities, and other suppliers, to work on projects.
- HSSO have two years of pilot projects- this work will inform their direction e.g., there is a need for support in supervision/ supervisor leadership and management.
- HSSO recently approved a project that will offer subsidised assessment of current capability nationally, for 1000 individuals, distributed through potentially ACSA, LASA and NDIS. Data will be collated, and feedback will be provided. Access to 5000 as a sample of current leadership and management capability.
- The recognition of existing skills /RPL has been a difficult issue and a key issue is, people progressing through their careers and employers understanding current competency skill sets and how they those skills can be applied in the workplace.

Part of industry understanding also involves talking with employers/ services that will say that they need somebody with a Certificate III and what the expected skill outcomes required are. The employer misunderstands that the skill/competency level that they require is above and beyond the Cert III level. It's a minimum broad range of skills and knowledge required but they are not industry experts and are without clinical expertise and may not be employment ready. This misunderstanding can be a roadblock when asking employers for feedback. Information about qualification frameworks would be beneficial to dispel this misunderstanding.

- HSSO currently having conversations with social services about the price page for disability and Aged Care support and what that buys in terms of what the level of worker is.
- A push down of range of skills of workers based on affordability; financial duress; undersupply of workers; regional issues; housing, availability of transport and what contributes to possibilities/ growing expectation of the capabilities of care workers.

What about recognising the skills and strengths of bilingual workers who are underrepresented in high demand in the sector? Strengths and values should also a part of workforce building as they are more likely to stay in the sector and keep their passion for their work.

- HSSO-Strengths and values is the basis which we should encourage people into training.
- It can be problematic if the worker doesn't have the right strengths and values or isn't the right fit, it demonstrates the framework in which we work means that RTOs can't discriminate against students who want to study in that frame. Behavioural attributes and values are qualities that employers should look at when recruiting. Training should be part of the employment process delivered in the workplace for the best outcomes of retaining staff.
- HSSO-Bilingual workers should be seen as strengths/ in high demand in the sector.
- National foundations skills programme- if an RTO combines diversity needs with the training, they can accommodate training in a variety of literacy and language needs. Employer's value the strength of bilingual workers; realise that benefit.

What are Top 2 priorities that need addressing to solve the labour supply issue in Aged Care?

- Aged Care Worker Registration- legislative process required to implement Aged Care Worker Registration is underway and the date of expected implementation is July 2022.
- Award wages - difficult to retain staff. Employer organisations have duty to ensure there is a value proposition and that they are looking after their staff after training and upskilling them.
- Wage claim currently in the Commission. Aged Care Workforce Council – negotiating/liaising with employers. Nexus between government funded nature of aged care and what wages look like. Pay may never be great, but need good conditions i.e., flexibility, training opportunities, career pathways and influence employers to think differently.
- Attractiveness of positions & Terminology/ Job Titles- e.g. Needs to be social marketing change-How we talk about roles and how we influence communities to think differently. Focus of the National level strategies - will elevate views, esteem, roles, getting it right.

a) How will HSSO deal with specific regional issues employment issues – e.g., Eastern Sydney - cost of living & attracting people into area; utilising people in area who have the capability.

b) What will HSSO's interactions with other organisations be i.e., Aged Care Industry Council, Skills IQ; and work on national qualifications?

- Skills IQ is a skills organisation with current responsibility for qualification development- intended responsibility handover to HSSO by January 2023. Process about current qualification development reform.
- Aged Care Workforce Industry Council upheld up by DOH implementing the National aged care workforce plan 'A Matter of Care'- Professor John Pollaers (2018) Ref: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/a-matter-of-care-australias-aged-care-workforce-strategy> -
- Language/Job Titles - Workforce are described as Aged & Disability Carers which is an inappropriate terminology as it sounds like they are all aged or have a disability.
- ACWIC are doing job architecture work- there is full scope to change titles to make them contemporary and appropriate.
- Challenge around data would be raised with ABS and the Department's to change that overall classification terminology. It flows through all their national datasets.

Is there a particular aspect of the workforce or is it clinical care? Do you have a particular issue in mind?

- Providers who provide home care packages, domestic assistance, and personal care, have trouble attracting people into Eastern Sydney.
- Difficult to recruit staff from non-English speaking backgrounds for the area.
- Applications in front of Fair Work
- It is hoped with the rewrite of the Aged Care Act, they look at reducing some regulations to get better workforce mobility in Mental Health, Aged Care, Disability, to maximise the limited pool of people in particular regions. Workers can potentially get the hours that they want, providers are able to cover shifts that they need, & that you are skilling a workforce, to grow local/ care local.
- Biggest problems for large Aged Care providers- People who work in the sector, have personal experience of large interstate Aged Care providers. The experience of staff in large providers, getting worse because of the focus on the bottom line. In smaller Aged Care providers, the quality of staffing remains is retained.

Rosanna Commisso | Home Support & Partnership Coordinator
rosannac@yourside.org.au | <https://sector.yourside.org.au/>