



## 2025 Progress Report

Implementation of the Recommendations of the  
Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

# Aged care workforce: building capacity and sustainability

The delivery of high-quality aged care is dependent on access to a skilled, committed and sustainable workforce, which is able to meet the scale of demand needed. The Royal Commission recognised this and called for upskilling, enhanced planning, higher wages and, for residential care, funding models and commitments to strengthen clinical care and the capacity of the aged care workforce.

## Positive reform is occurring

The Inspector-General acknowledges the positive reform actions of government and has heard the tangible improvements these reforms have already made to the aged care workforce.

### Wage increase

In March 2024 the Fair Work Commission announced the decision to increase the wages of certain aged care workers based on historic undervaluing. This significant injection of funding to boost aged care workers' wages, is critical to address workforce shortages and make aged care a more attractive industry.

### Strengthening workforce capability

The government has invested funding to develop a range of supports to strengthen the aged care workforce, including the development and implementation of clinical placement support, scholarships, education and training materials.

Further educational reform is evidenced through the National Skills Agreement, which commenced on 1 January 2024. The Agreement is supported by a \$414 million commitment to deliver an additional 300,000 fee-free TAFE and VET places from 2024–2026.

### Legislation

The *Aged Care Act 2024* (the Act) recognises the importance of the workforce in the delivery of high quality and safe aged care. The Act provides:

- legislative support for a worker screening framework
- inclusion in the Statement of Principles recognising the importance of aged care workers
- inclusion in the objects of the Act to 'provide for sustainable funding arrangements for the delivery of aged care services by a diverse, trained and appropriately skilled workforce'.

## Transformative reform is yet to happen

Despite positive reforms actions, the transformative reform needed to strengthen and equip the aged care workforce's delivery of high-quality care (as defined by the Act) is not yet evident.

The Inspector-General calls for strategic workforce planning and the implementation of outstanding Royal Commission recommendations including:

- mandatory training to equip workers with the skills and knowledge to care for people from diverse backgrounds and identities
- mandatory minimum qualifications for personal care workers
- national worker screening and registration.

# Urgent gaps remain unaddressed

## Loss of industry knowledge

While AN-ACC provided welcome additional funding, its focus on the delivery of care minutes by registered nurses can come at the expense of care delivered by enrolled nurses.

The Inspector-General heard the reduction in experienced enrolled nurses has left inexperienced registered nurses feeling exposed. This exposure risks the quality of care provided to residents in service-provision and can exacerbates workforce shortages.

## Reporting requirements may detract from care delivery

The Inspector-General heard both personal care workers and nurses feel the time they have available to deliver personal care and support is being steadily eroded by increasingly prescriptive administrative and reporting tasks.

The Inspector-General is concerned the new prudential standards add a further layer of intensive and 'unnecessary' reporting requirements and detracts from delivery of tangible high-quality care.

## Restrictive practices remain over-used

There is no mandatory training for workforce on how to reduce and eliminate the use of restrictive practices in aged care, and how to better understand the needs or psychological symptoms of conditions like dementia which sees their overuse. The Act does not directly address the continued over-reliance on restrictive practices.

Restrictive practices can be a serious human rights abuse. Failure to reduce and eliminate these practices compromises the most basic of rights contained within the Act.

## Mandatory training

The Royal Commission called for mandatory training to develop an aged care workforce capable of supporting:

- People with behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia
- Culturally and linguistically diverse older people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders
- People with diverse life experiences and identities
- People receiving palliative or end of life care.

Under the Act it is a condition of registration that providers must meet any prescribed qualifications and training requirements, but does not specify the above as prescribed or mandatory training. As a result, it will likely be the workforce will possess these much-needed skills on an ad hoc, rather than consistent basis.

## Career development and pathways for workforce retention and progression

Greater workforce quality relies on retention of qualified and experienced workers. Strong incentives for career and ongoing personal development is necessary to retain workers in the aged care sector, against so much workforce competition. It is also vital to the long-term development of the aged care workforce, so desperately needed.