

## Renewing aged care's workforce

OUR AGED CARE workforce – its viability and future – is something aged care providers think about every day – from challenges in attracting and retaining staff to contemplating the ageing profile of our workers.

The future of our aged care workforce has been the focus of a long-running Senate inquiry.

Giving evidence to the inquiry in Canberra in early November, we suggested there are three big drivers of change in the aged care sector that will impact on the future of our workforce: population, expectation and innovation.

Australia is reaching a 'new normal' with regard to the number of people in our population who are aged over 65 and, indeed, aged over 85. These older Australians have broader expectations of how, when, where and by whom their care is provided.



Sean Rooney, CEO of LASA

Older Australians also have new expectations around the role of innovative aged care technologies.

Australia's future aged care workforce will need an expanded set of skills and attributes to meet these challenges.

The existing workforce will need to be renewed as the latest statistics tell us that an

estimated 60 per cent of the current aged care workforce will reach retirement age over the next 15 years.

These workers will not only need to be replaced, but our aged care workforce needs to rapidly increase to meet the growing demand for different types of services.

The workforce will need

**“Older Australians also have new expectations around the role of innovative aged care technologies.”**

to be responsive, knowing that we have a new cohort of older Australians with increased expectations of the way their care is delivered.

Workers will also need to be adaptive, with technology likely to significantly impact on the type of care and services that are delivered and the training and skills required.

Our future workforce will also need appropriate and flexible industrial arrangements with staff that can work across residential, home and community based settings.

Finally, as industry and government contemplate future workforce design, special consideration must be given to rural and regional aged care workforces, and to the particular needs of indigenous, LGBTI and culturally and linguistically diverse older Australians. ■

## Catering to diversity



Dr Helen Barrie (Feist), president of the AAG

WHEN WE THINK of designing something as complex as aged care services for all Australians we need to be cognisant of who the service is for.

Demographically, Australia's older population has well and truly moved past the homogenous group it once represented.

In fact, if we consider the diverse population groups

now represented in the wider Australian population we can see just how diverse our older Australian population really is.

Consider this: by 2020 around 30 per cent of the Australian population will be from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, with almost 50 per cent of us either a first or second generation migrant.

Around 11 per cent of the population includes individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex; 3 per cent of the population are estimated to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and almost 30 per cent of the population lives outside of a major city (that is, in regional, rural and remote locations).

While these population groups are by no means 'mutually exclusive', together they increasingly represent a substantial component of our older population.

In 2011 the Productivity Commission's *Caring for Older Australians* report recognised the need for aged care services to cater for older people with diverse needs and this need continues today.

In 2017 the AAG is proud to be a part of a working group, with the LGBTI Health Alliance, FECCA and NACCHO, among others, developing a new diversity framework for all older Australians.

The framework will include core principles that apply across all special needs groups; supporting specific strategies and best practice principles for each of the identified diverse populations.

This is a critical piece of work as Australia moves towards a consumer-focused, market-driven model of care where those older people with specific or complex needs may find

themselves marginalised or excluded from aged care services. Further updates on the progress of this diversity framework will follow in 2017. ■

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