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SPRING 2023



Inside this issue: *Interview with QPS Benchmarking General Manager Adam Holcroft*



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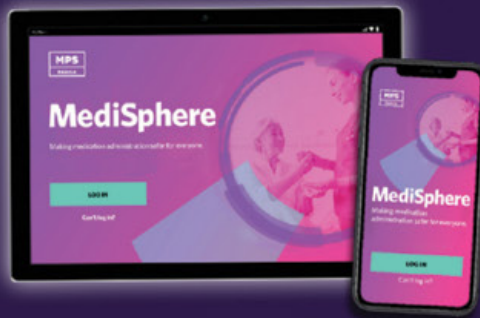


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Foreword

As the Australian aged care sector continues to grapple with ongoing changes in regulation, funding models and workforce shortages, the Spring Edition of *hello leaders* addresses a number of challenges being faced by care providers.

The Spring Edition includes opinion pieces from our guest contributors:

Jason Binder, Respect Aged Care CEO, reveals the negative impact of accepting underperforming staff in the face of workforce shortages and how to leverage your performance management strategy to cultivate a positive workplace culture.

Grant Corderoy, Senior Partner, StewartBrown, highlights the urgent need for collaborative action among stakeholders to enact structural changes in the aged care sector following the Royal Commission's recommendations.

James Shaw, RFBI Deputy CEO and Chief Financial Officer, shares insights into the root causes of Australia's aged care staffing shortages currently affecting care providers and measures to address the issue.

Much like the chefs that occupy aged care kitchens, this edition of *hello leaders* dishes up a wide variety of content that is easily digestible and aims to appease the informational appetites of those that break bread in the Australian aged care industry. While too many cooks are known to spoil a broth, the team at *hello leaders* feels that the best ingredients for delicious discourse are the opinions and insights of those at the top of the food chain within aged care providers. So grab your napkin and let's dig in. *Bon Appetit!*

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OPINION

Aged care sector needs a leader and commitment

The aged care sector is at a very important junction which will require leadership, vision and courage from all stakeholders, including the government, opposition parties, government agencies, community, workforce and providers

by **Grant Corderoy**,
Senior Partner, StewartBrown

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety delivered its final report *"Care, Dignity and Respect"* in February 2021 which included 148 Recommendations which effectively challenged the aged care sector to implement structural changes to ensure that elderly Australians had access to a standard of care that was equal to any in the world.

In this context, *Recommendation 25* has significant importance. This recommendation was to combine the existing, and somewhat disparate, aged care segments which includes CHSP, STRC, HCP and RAC to create a one program that is integrated, comprehensive, provides choice and flexibility.

This one program should also interface with senior housing and disability services to provide greater coverage and service delivery.



Grant Corderoy, Senior Partner StewartBrown
Chartered Accountants (Image: Supplied)

The current government is focussed on addressing the community expectations that were highlighted in the last federal election cycle, and has a Minister in Anika Wells who is invested in the sector and driving the reform process through legislation together with the implementation of necessary reforms such as mandated direct care minutes, Star Ratings for providers, 24/7 registered nurses in residential aged care, and a Support at Home program.

Similarly, the opposition spokesperson, Senator Ann Ruston is also an active participant, which leads to good governance and accountability.

Typically, as with any community based sector, financial sustainability is an important component. Residential aged care is characterised by having high staffing levels (and associated costs) and capital (building and equipment) costs.

The taxpayer provides over 75% of the funding for residential aged care and a greater percentage for community care.

THE RECENTLY RELEASED GOVERNMENT REPORT "FINANCIAL REPORT ON THE AGED CARE SECTOR" NOTED THAT GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ON THE SECTOR FOR THE 2021-22 FINANCIAL YEAR WAS \$24.8 BILLION WITH THE SECTOR SERVICING 1.2 MILLION CARE RECIPIENTS.

The financial report also noted that the residential aged care sector operated at an aggregate deficit of \$2.264 billion, which after allowing for one-off write back of bed licences, was still an operating deficit of \$1.451 billion. This was also the fifth successive year of losses for the residential segment, and has led to an erosion of capital, less investment and an overall

lack of financial confidence by providers and the community.

Whilst not as dramatic, the financial performance of the community aged care segments are also declining.

THIS HAS CREATED A JUXTAPOSITION WHEREBY ON ONE HAND WE NEED TO ENSURE CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT IN PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICES, AND ON THE OTHER THE ABILITY TO AFFORD THESE SERVICES.

The Aged Care Taskforce, another positive initiative by the government, is charged with a primary fundamental, but not easy task – to consider equitable methods to increase the funding envelope for aged care, whilst ensuring equity for all elderly persons, an inclusive safety net for those in financial need and to encourage innovation and investment in the sector.

Increased funding can primarily come from two sources, the taxpayer and the consumer. Increased taxpayer funding requires consideration of increased taxes, be it a levy, via a higher GST rate or direct taxes. This will require an entire Government's commitment, not the least being treasury.

Increased consumer contribution may be a more palatable and realistic option but will require greater education as to the costs of providing care, expectations as to the quality of improved care delivery, and ability of the consumer to meet increased contributions.

It is likely that the increased funding envelope will be a combination of taxpayer funded and direct consumer funded.

This brings us to the issue of understanding the cost components in delivery of care. With residential aged care, there are three distinct (and complimentary) care delivery streams:

Direct Care – the clinical care that each resident receives in a home, and includes nursing and personal care, allied health among others. These costs are funded by the taxpayer through a care subsidy (AN-ACC) which represents over 96% of the funding required.

Everyday Living – the daily services such as meals, cleaning, laundry and utilities that a resident receives or uses during their stay. This is funded by majority through a daily fee, calculated as being 85% of the single pension with an additional government adding to the



Residential aged care is characterised by having high staffing levels and capital costs. (Image: Shutterstock)

supplement subsidy. Additional services may be available at an extra cost.

Accommodation – the cost associated with living in an aged care home. This is a complicated mix of alternate methods to pay for this accommodation, involving a choice between daily accommodation payments, a fully refundable deposit that attracts no interest to the resident or a combination of both. Where a resident does not have the ability to pay, the government provides a subsidy to cover most of the daily payment.

THE ISSUE, HOWEVER, FROM A FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE, IS THAT THE ACTUAL COST FOR PROVIDING THESE SERVICES EXCEEDS THE REVENUE (SUBSIDY PLUS CONSUMER FEES) BY AN AVERAGE OF OVER \$15 PER DAY, AND UP TO \$40 PER DAY FOR SOME HOMES. THIS IS NOT FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE, WITH ALMOST TWO THIRDS OF HOMES OPERATING AT A LOSS.

This is where leadership will be required from each of the stakeholders, and not just the Government. Understanding the cost components and what revenue is required to meet these is part of the solution. The next part is for the community to accept the notion that they should co-contribute to the cost of receiving care, and in particular to the daily services such as everyday living and accommodation that they have paid for all their adult lives including if they are receiving funded care in their existing home.

Commission is there's still so much work to do in this space.

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The Magic Faraway Tree and other aged care bedtime stories

by Rhod Ellis-Jones,
Managing Director, Ellis-Jones

The aged care sector is currently at its most divisive state. With pay gaps and a bone-tired workforce, there are several cracks in the field that need our attention. But how did we get here? How has looking after our own older citizens become such a difficult task?

In the last chapter of Enid Blyton's classic book, *The Magic Faraway Tree*, the children climb up the boughs of a great old tree through the clouds and into the Land of Presents, where gifts hang from trees. Thinking they can have whatever they want, the children rush to pull the gifts from their branches. However, gifts are controlled by goblins – of the benign, somewhat friendly kind – who will only dispense them to people asking for them in order to give them to someone else.

Earlier this year, reading the draft Australian government's *National Care and Support Economy Strategy*, I was left with one prevailing thought: we are not addressing what people want and how they behave.

In fact, after a decade of 'consumer directed care', the epic struggle between policymakers, economists, and service providers that periodically dominates the news cycle, feels like it is happening in a misty, stormy, cloud while the people of the nation move in its shadow, below.

I found myself asking, despite all the best intentions, are we missing the point? Are we making the obvious excruciatingly complicated, top heavy and expensive.

AGED CARE IS NOT A MARKET-BASED SECTOR IN WHICH PEOPLE PAY FOR A SERVICE DIRECTLY BY SHOPPING FOR A PRODUCT, SERVICE, OR EXPERIENCE MANUFACTURED FOR THEM.

Australians pay for aged care indirectly through taxes, and, in so doing, relinquish control over a level of decision-making to the government. The notion is that the Government acts in our best interests, and on our behalf. And it does, to a degree.

However, the Government balances investment in aged care against thousands of other needs and priorities. Departments rarely get the funding they want; money is allocated on a range of factors, of which customer outcomes is one; the process is time consuming.



Rhod Ellis-Jones, Managing Director, Ellis-Jones
(Image: Supplied)

Trade-offs happen at the outset. The results of early decisions cascade down to service providers with a relatively fixed income and then to case managers and facility managers who negotiate with families acting on behalf of, and with, the customer – an elderly Australian facing the ultimate reality of old age.

“VIA THE SERVICE PROVIDER, THE CUSTOMER LEARNS THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT CONSTRAINTS ON CHOICE AND MANY INFLUENCING FORCES, SOME IMMEDIATE AND OTHERS DISTANT. THE PATH PRESENTED IS NOT CLEAR OR SMOOTH, DENSE WITH MANY MORE DECISIONS AND REQUIREMENTS.”

Is this consumer directed care? Or is it a modernised version of a legacy system which began post war to care for older people?

Over the past two decades, the aged care system has been in an uncomfortable state of flux (or contortion). Government in its role as regulator, and baby boomers in their active role as consumer, have demanded higher standards of care and accommodation. That sounds like a win. However, the removal of low (residential) care and the pivot to home care has been a rough ride. People have been told that care is available, that it is consumer directed. They arrive with nervous and unprepared family members, often stumbling from a hospital discharge process, not always clear about the support they can get and confused or

disappointed when the support available doesn't always meet their needs (or isn't available).

So, are we addressing what the people want, and how they behave?

1. A motivated, capable, and resilient workforce

Ask any customer receiving care what is the most important and rewarding aspect of the experience and they will almost always say the relationship with the carer or support worker.

Having a consistent team of carers who are experienced, responsive, and informed matters above all else.

Unfortunately, distances to and between shifts, service time length, limited commitment to any one employer, and other factors act as barriers to home care worker recruitment and retention.

A 15 per cent wage increase was an important start. But it was already very low, and the Australian unemployment rate is at near record lows of 3.6%.

On Friday 4 August, the Aged Care Workforce Industry Council (ACWIC) announced it was shutting its doors, leaving the large and ever-present question of, how are we going to attract the right people to the sector, and how are we going to keep them?

Behavioural science dictates we need to raise awareness and understanding, as well as opportunity, capability, and motivation. We need a national communication campaign, to attract workers to aged care, one that acknowledges Australia's diversity and diverse use of media to seek and assess information and a campaign that stretches over multiple years, informed by behaviour change principles to achieve scale.

It must be easier to learn about, train for and find a job. Worker mobility needs to be built into economic and other incentives. Affordable housing needs to be built where the work is delivered.

2. Think differently about services

The recent ACCPA *Financial Sustainability Summit Issues Paper* has created space for the Government to address that once politically toxic notion of user pays in aged care, offering different pathways to higher aged care funding. In the mix is superannuation. However, it frames the issue as one of financial sustainability instead of independence and choice, and one of intergenerational balance (or conflict).

We need to acknowledge that this and future generations of older people have higher expectations for accommodation and care than

those that came before them. They are also, on average, wealthier and can exercise that wealth in the most important investment we can all make – in our health, wellbeing and longevity.

Service and product innovation will accelerate in an increasingly competitive aged care system. We shouldn't be scared if these innovations push the boundaries of what we currently consider 'aged care', or who delivers that care. In fact, that should be the primary focus of policy that is human-centred.

That might mean less restrictive definitions of residential care and home care, bringing back 'low care' under another name to support people who can't age in place at home, don't want to commit to buying into a retirement village, but want the confidence of care nearby.

It should also take costs of the government's balance sheet: not by policy edict, but because of customer choice.

3. Design services with employees, individuals, and their families

Opportunities to create individual and family wellness start long before someone receives care or enters a home. Along the aged care journey, there are critical points that affect health and wellbeing; among them, initial referral, assessment, financial arrangements, transition of health professional support, entering a home, navigating services and palliative arrangements.

What if we viewed every one of these as an opportunity to create value rather than mitigate concern? Not only in the moment, but central to the aged care promise.

Naive? Let's try it and then make that call.

We should be confident because at the foundation of the aged care value proposition is the creation of shared value: a balance of financial investment and social impact. That makes sense to every Australian who has ever worked a job, and earned a dollar to invest in the life they want. It should make sense to governments, in a capitalist democracy, in 2023.

Enid Blyton felt she had a responsibility to provide readers with a moral framework and built it into her narratives. Morals are standards of behaviour defined by people of influence and adopted by the general community. They change with time.

We need to ask Australians in 2023 what they want and design to achieve it.

Rhod Ellis-Jones provides research, strategy, design and communications services to the aged care sector. www.ellisjones.com.au



How to support an underperforming employee

It's concerning when an employee's performance drops at work. Even more if they've consistently been underperforming despite receiving constant support. Here's how you can handle these tough situations sensitively.

by Alex Jacobs, Journalist, hello leaders

When an employee consistently fails to perform at an expected level, what are your rights as an employer? Are there grounds for termination if they're behind in KPIs or essential tasks are incomplete? Or should you provide additional support and training when you notice an employee starts struggling with their performance?

Let's take a look at the important steps required to manage underperforming employees.

How can you define underperformance?

- * Typical signs include an employee not performing their regular duties at all, or not to the required standard
- * Performance standards and KPIs will help you recognise when someone is falling short of workload expectations
- * Output isn't the only concern as underperforming employees may display disruptive behaviour that impacts colleagues, or is non-compliant with workplace policies and rules
- * This could be the cause of teamwide performance issues and complaints directed towards the underperforming individual

Why are they underperforming?

Is the person a poor fit for the job? Do they lack the necessary skills? Or just misunderstanding expectations? Most often, we can find a mismatch between managers' and employees' understanding of good performance.

Like any scenario, no decision regarding an employee should be made until you understand why their output and behaviour have changed.

If their performance at work or workplace habits are not up to scratch, you might find:

- * They simply don't know how to do the job due to inexperience or poor training
- * A lack of direction or leadership has left them with no guidance or daily support
- * The required tools and resources for the job are not available
- * External factors have impacted their mental health and work motivation, causing a drop in productivity
- * Conflict and a toxic team environment have negatively impacted work enjoyment
- * They feel underappreciated as a result of low wages or not receiving rewards and recognition at work

How should you approach them?

An attentive manager can pick up on the cause of underperformance, but more often than not, a deeper conversation with the employee is required. It's the best way to understand what's going on and how you can help.



An underperforming employee may be struggling with the workload, or they could be avoiding making an effort entirely. (Image: Shutterstock)



Susan Sadler, Founder and CEO of Red Wagon Workplace Solutions
(Image: Supplied)

The perfect time to support an employee is from the day they start. Keep an eye on performance during their probationary period, otherwise, you'll find it's harder to make changes once that period's over. You can also identify how well someone takes feedback.

Susan Sadler, Founder and CEO of Red Wagon Workplace Solutions, said feedback, positive or negative, should be ongoing to ensure consistent employee support. But when you do notice something's wrong, such as an employee missing two deadlines in a row or taking more sick days than normal, it's essential you speak to them directly.

"Generally a good approach can be to make time for an informal discussion and present the employee with some examples of your concerns. Then you can ask them what obstacles are stopping them from achieving the expected performance level and work together on a plan for improvement," Ms Sadler said.

"IF PERFORMANCE DOESN'T IMPROVE, THEN ESCALATE THE CONVERSATION TO A FORMAL PROCESS. EMPLOYEES SHOULD ALWAYS BE GIVEN ADVANCE NOTICE OF A FORMAL PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION AND ADVISED THAT THEY CAN BRING A SUPPORT PERSON WITH THEM TO THE MEETING."

Whether informal or formal, Ms Sadler also said it's essential to keep good records of your meetings with employees. Notes are acceptable, but emailing a summary of the meeting is a great way to highlight key actions and who is accountable for specific responsibilities.

What are the best supports to offer?

If you notice your employee is eager to change and make improvements, chances are you can turn things around. Otherwise, it can be hard to train someone who isn't willing to accept their shortcomings. For instance, if an employee says, 'I am who I am', it would imply they aren't the right fit moving forward as they're not willing to work with you.

When working with an employee to strengthen performance, create a performance improvement plan. This is a detailed outline of concerns, possible solutions, desired outcomes and the timeframe in which improvement is to be achieved. Ms Sadler reaffirmed the importance of documenting how an employee is going to be supported (such as formal skills training or mentoring) or the tasks required of the employee (improved time management or checklist organisation).

"ULTIMATELY, WHAT SUPPORT IS PROVIDED DEPENDS ON THE PARTICULAR PERFORMANCE ISSUE, BUT EMPLOYERS NEED TO BE REASONABLE AND PRACTICAL IN WHAT SUPPORT THEY OFFER RATHER THAN PLACING ALL RESPONSIBILITY ONTO THE EMPLOYEE," SHE SAID.

It's also critical you consistently check in with your workforce. It's not enough to put someone in a training program and expect them to be better; they still require guidance and leadership on-site. Supporting and upskilling your staff takes time, so be prepared and patient.

What if it's just not working?

What happens if you've supported an employee's requests, invested everything you can and provided a reasonable amount of time for improvement, but still haven't seen the expected results?

Disciplinary actions such as an official warning or termination of employment are accepted if there's valid evidence of underperformance and a just and fair performance review process. You must have provided specific and fair feedback showing achievable outcomes, while it's critical you outline potential negative outcomes at the very beginning of the process.

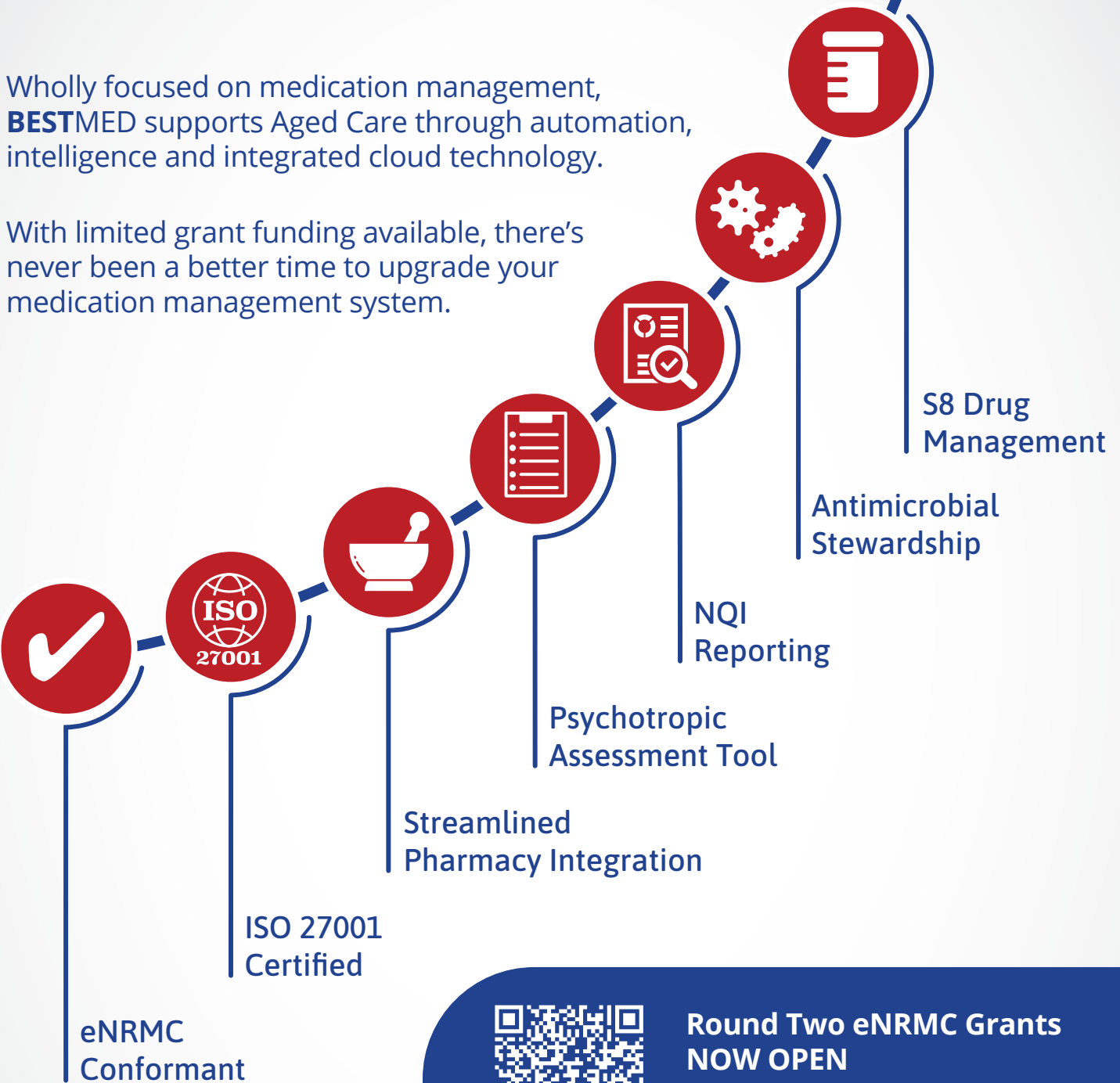
"The circumstances where an employer can unilaterally terminate an employee are rare, and a fair process must be applied in all situations. This doesn't mean that an employer must bend over backwards to accommodate unreasonable requests or put up with poor performance for long periods of time," Ms Sadler said.

However, if you feel there's value in their employment but they're just not suited to the role, consider exploring opportunities elsewhere in the organisation. While that's not always a practical option, it could save an employee from unemployment, or benefit you through staff retention.

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LEADERSHIP

Tackling middle management team burnout

By Bianca Iovino, Journalist, hello leaders

Those working in middle management in the aged care space have battled through major feats in the last few years. With the challenges of COVID-19 putting pressure on the sector – particularly residential aged care – tighter Government regulations, mandatory reporting and staff shortages, it's safe to assume they're burnt out. But they're not alone.

Since the pandemic, half of Australian workers have experienced the 'great burnout'. Even before COVID, middle management grappled with implementing strategies from above and coaching their teams coupled with long hours, high workplace demands and limited resources.

We all have an 'off' day every now and then, but

for overworked managers, the problem is much more serious and can present in a range of physical, emotional and behavioural signs and symptoms.

Overworked managers can lead to employee burnout, a specialised type of work-related stress that can leave workers in a state of complete mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion – obstructing them from a healthy work-life balance and thus from doing their job to the best of their ability. Fixing burnout takes time, intention, and organisational support to restore a sense of balance and feeling energised and motivated again.

Identifying burnout

Middle managers feel a unique form of pressure from above and below without receiving the same type of development or empowerment more senior

managers receive. This means middle management often end up doing the work themselves alongside their team to keep things afloat.

When trying to identify if middle management in your organisation are overworked, consider asking these questions:

- ✱ Where and why is middle management experiencing burnout in my organisation?
- ✱ What demands are risking their workforce resilience?
- ✱ How many resources do they have?
- ✱ What kind of questionnaires or feedback methods can I offer them to understand the presence, severity and location of burnout so I can help fix it?

Communicate

Fostering healthy communication and practising active listening is essential for all staff members but especially those in middle management.

Open communication and a strong open-door policy can offer a "light at the end of the tunnel" in tough situations and shows middle management you care about their well-being. As the go-to for other employees' queries and qualms, those in middle management also need to feel supported to be able to pass that support onto others. This can lead to improved morale and employee satisfaction.



We all have 'off' days but for overworked managers, the problem is much more serious (Image: Shutterstock)

If these staff members don't feel fulfilled or supported in their roles, they are likely to seek new employment elsewhere.

Recognition

It's not uncommon for middle management to go without accolades and recognition for the work they've done – often making miracles happen with a small pool of resources or budget.

But studies have shown there is a strong correlation between recognition and well-being which leads to better performance and outcomes.

In an industry where the list of things to do is endless and many get done quietly without acknowledgement, see how you can implement a recognition system for this cohort so they know the work they do is important and valuable. It could be as easy as a verbal or written "thank you" to show your appreciation.

Setting a clear standard

The nature of business can sometimes be turbulent and ever-changing, particularly as the sector grapples with Government reforms.

Consistently unclear and continuously changing priorities blunts mental sharpness and deteriorates those in middle management's ability to figure out what it is you need. This increases the likelihood of overwhelm and burnout.

Everyone is different but when burnout is present, capacity diminishes. Consider doing a workload assessment for members of this team. Where possible, redistributing or reassigning work to others in the team may be beneficial to keep

individuals from drowning and potentially leaving the role.

There still are only 24 hours in a day, but you can adjust the scope of the work to be consistent with the resources you have available. You may find you need more resources to hire more people, even if it's temporarily.

Not everything can be done at a gold standard, so it's important to communicate that to middle management and refrain from overloading their plate. Work out your key priorities for this cohort and make time to liaise with them so they know what needs to be done now and what can wait.

By explicitly stating when you do want the gold standard, or when a silver, or even a bronze version will do, your middle management will thank you.

Giving permission to negotiate

Sometimes, there is a gap between executive expectations and middle manager understanding and capacity.

Those in middle management experience a lot of stress about pleasing those in higher roles which often leads them to accept these, sometimes, unrealistic standards without considering how they will be done to keep everyone happy.

But capacity is a finite resource, so it's important to give them permission to negotiate expectations with you. Negotiation is an important stress reliever as middle management sometimes struggle with navigating, so open that space up for them in the onset to reduce the likelihood of burnout developing.



Engaging with middle management staff frequently could see them banish the toxic "warrior mentality" (Image: Shutterstock)

Quashing the "warrior mentality"

The chances are there are members of your middle management team that have a "warrior" or "soldier on" mentality. While their commitment to the role is admirable, these mindsets should not be encouraged or tolerated as they override the individual's boundaries and propels them towards burnout.

The importance of rest and recovering is vital, particularly among a cohort that always has tasks to achieve with minimal staff to help it come to fruition.

Build a culture where your middle management feel comfortable taking a sick day or some holiday time off work to maintain their personal life, needs and well-being.

This can be done by making holidays mandatory and role modelling this behaviour yourself.

We spend so much of our life at work and that can sometimes bleed into our personal lives, health and well-being.

Your middle management team are responsible for many moving parts in your organisation, so it's important to make sure they feel supported, recognised and equipped to do their job to keep them in these roles while avoiding burnout.



Juggling act: Growing a family and a business

While some women may feel like having a family holds them back, these front runners have built their businesses from the ground up and focus on being role models for their children

by **Alex Jacobs**, *Journalist, hello leaders*

After losing half her client base to an ex-staff member, Rie Bredow, Director of Rie Care and a mum-of-two, could have easily packed it all in. She was already sacrificing her own shifts and her own income to support her staff, a heavy blow for her family of four.

However, spurred on by the support of her remaining staff and clientele, Ms Bredow rebuilt. Now, in its fourth year of operation, Rie Care has expanded beyond the support care and nursing company Ms Bredow first aspired for. Influenced by personal experiences, the small provider has chiselled its own niche in the market. Like any good business, it recognised what people needed more of.

“We’ve added a lot of services, including cleaning services and holistic health care. That’s influenced by my own disabilities and illnesses and I’ve found over time holistic health, from psychic medium right through to massage therapy and aromatherapy, have all helped me. So rather than pick one or the other I think modern-day medicine and holistic healthcare work well together. It was my goal to bring that to the community,” Ms Bredow said.

THERE’S ALSO A DEEPLY PERSONAL CONNECTION TO THE CLEANING SERVICES, SOMETHING MOST PEOPLE WOULDN’T GIVE A SECOND THOUGHT. MS BREDOW SAW IT AS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE PEOPLE WITH DIFFICULT BACKGROUNDS BACK INTO THE WORKFORCE – INCLUDING PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

“They’re just looking to get back into life and work. They want to contribute to their household and I thought cleaning is a great entry-level job

where you can work without too much stress and pressure. It’s another avenue of creating jobs and we then look at hiring those who are really in need of work, a purpose. Maybe they’re a little lost, have a disability or have escaped domestic violence,” she said.

Mum’s the word

What’s harder, being a parent or running a business? Does it really matter when you have to juggle both responsibilities at the exact same time?

There’s freedom in running your own business as you can work towards a timetable that suits your needs. Danielle Robinson, Founder and Owner of SCOUT Lifestyle Concierge and mum-of-two, has plenty of experience doing just this. She honed her craft while working in the middle of the night when the kids would be sleeping, or during those tight windows of opportunity between family-related events. But it’s not always that easy.

“I LEARNT VERY QUICKLY THAT YOUR PRIORITIES CHANGE OVERNIGHT WHEN YOU BECOME A PARENT. AND LIFE CAN BE VERY UNPREDICTABLE, NO MATTER HOW ORGANISED YOU ARE,” SHE SAID.

“The hardest part was starting [the business]. Once I decided, it was all systems go to get things up and running. I surrounded myself with other niche small businesses that provided advice and support. I learnt very early on you can’t do it all, and some things just aren’t my forte. Outsourcing is key to keeping things in momentum and also to keep you motivated.”

Danielle’s tips for productivity

- ✳ I like to start my day feeling in charge of what life may throw at me. I never go to bed without writing my to-do list for the next day.

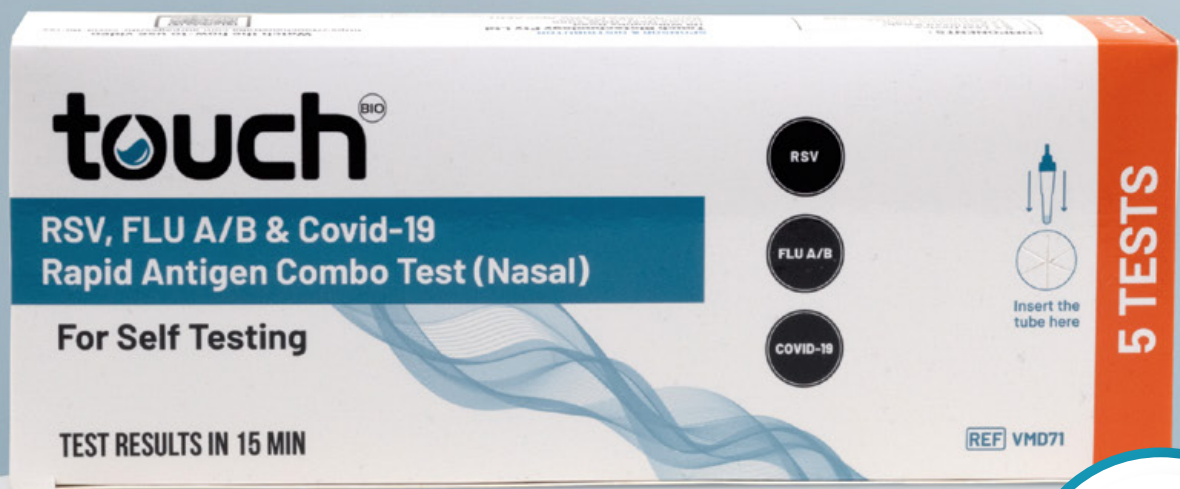


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Danielle Robinson, Founder/Owner of SCOUT Lifestyle Concierge and a mum of two girls. (Source: Instagram)

- ✳ Having a morning routine also helps my mindset and motivation. I get up between 5.30–6am most days and start my morning with a nutritious breakfast smoothie.
- ✳ I always make my bed, it kick starts a chain of other good decisions throughout the day and gives me a sense of taking charge.
- ✳ I love walking and listening to podcasts. In particular personal development and mindset books. Two of my favourite productivity books are 'The Slight Edge' by John Olsen and 'Eat the Frog' by Brian Tracy.

There are the little things, too. All parents know how hard it is to coordinate school drop-offs and pick-ups, let alone all the after-school activities and weekend events. So when you're planning, don't forget things like travel time because it might mean a job just isn't worth it.

But remember, just because something might seem difficult, it doesn't mean you can't ask for help. Ms Robinson said she's always cautious to not overcommit but there will be times when she has to reach out to family for a helping hand with the kids. That in itself has been a major learning curve as an independent business owner.

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN VERY SELF-SUFFICIENT, BUT AM GETTING MUCH BETTER AT ASKING FOR SUPPORT WHEN I NEED IT. I LOVE THAT MY SCHEDULE IS FLEXIBLE SO I CAN TAKE TIME OUT TO ATTEND SCHOOL EXCURSIONS AND SPORTS DAYS," SHE SAID.

"Having the flexibility of owning your own business when you are running your own schedule is something I love and I could never go back to working for someone else."

A successful balancing act

With successful businesses, you could excuse both Ms Robinson and Ms Bredow for showing the most pride in their professional lives. But it's undoubtedly their personal ones that are the most important. Ms Bredow has seen this firsthand as her daughters went from playing as teachers at a school to being the school's boss.

"You can tell they see what you're doing and then they go and do that which is a positive motivator for them. I want to show they can achieve anything they put their minds to and nobody can tell you can't, even if it's hard," she said.

That said, it can be hard being a parent and a business owner. It won't be smooth sailing every day of the week, and it requires a lot of time to set things up. But if you can put in the hard work when establishing your business, you will enjoy the benefits.

"I WORKED REALLY HARD IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS TO PUT EVERYTHING IN PLACE SO THAT I DON'T HAVE TO WORK WEEKENDS. IT'S PRIORITISING YOUR FAMILY TIME AND NOT ALLOWING YOURSELF TO WAIT FOR THE TIME. DON'T WAIT FOR FREE TIME, IT WON'T COME. YOU HAVE TO MAKE IT," SAID MS BREDOW.

"It's a very fine line [running a business with kids]; it's like a tightrope you're balancing on every day. But I wouldn't change it for the world."



Rie Bredow, Director of Rie Care, has seen her role as a business owner positively influence how her two girls view the world and their life goals. (Source: Supplied)



How to ace the onboarding process with your new employees

by Alex Jacobs, *Journalist, hello leaders*

An effective onboarding process is one of the most impactful parts of your recruitment process. It's arguably a job-defining period of time when employees are either set up for success – or potentially failure.

To better understand how employers can ace the onboarding process, *hello leaders* spoke to two leading HR experts for their tips and insights.

Engage with staff before day one

The first day of a new job can be incredibly overwhelming, so it's up to the employer to help ease an employee into a new environment. But you don't have to wait until they officially start. Susan Sadler, the Founder and CEO of Red Wagon Workplace Solutions, emphasised that onboarding begins well before the first day on the job.

"EVERY TOUCH POINT WITH YOUR ORGANISATION IS PART OF THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND MAKING THEM FEEL WELCOME. SMALL DETAILS LIKE LETTING THEM KNOW WHERE TO GET GOOD COFFEE FROM ON THE FIRST DAY AND PARKING ARRANGEMENTS CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO A NEW AND NERVOUS STAFF MEMBER," MS SADLER SAID.

Communicate clearly

While you're at it, don't forget to communicate clearly. Have an organised onboarding process planned out to suit individual or group intakes, and have the information ready for employees before they start. Otherwise, a haphazard introduction could leave employees set up for failure, according to Kara Kochanski, HR Consultant and Advisor.

"Onboarding can really make or break an employee's career at a company. For example,

if you look at a tripod, if it doesn't have three legs on the ground, it will fall over. It's the same for your employees; you want to set them up for success, which means ensuring you fully equip them during the onboarding process," Ms Kochanski said.

Quick tips

- * Have an employee's manager or team leader reach out after they've been offered the role, especially if HR or an external agency was involved in the recruitment
- * Notify them of where and when to meet, what they need on the first day, any potential parking tips, etc



Pairing a new staff member with an experienced one during their first few days will help ease their transition into an unfamiliar work environment. (Source: Shutterstock)

- ✳ Provide a clear plan of tasks and duties to help employees understand the outcomes you want early on, including itemised daily structures with a clear purpose
- ✳ Don't forget new recruits come with their own expertise, use that to allocate future projects to them

Show them the ropes

When onboarding, ensure there's time to meet key workplace figures, including C-level executives, department heads and team members. Your employees should be able to see where they fit in and feel comfortable. Ms Kochanski said incorporating existing team meetings into onboarding schedules is a great way to achieve early employee investment.

"Engaging as a team is really important for new employees, whether it's being involved in a 15-minute stand up or a more formal handover like you get in aged care and shift work environments," she said.

"It's the company prioritising a culture where they're not just colleagues, they become friends. It's building relationships because you want your employees to be invested in what they're doing and the company and you will create a better team and culture."

- ✳ An in-depth initiation where company culture is prioritised will encourage employees to talk to their leader and colleagues if issues arise in the first week
- ✳ Another effective onboarding tip is to pair new hires with an experienced colleague who acts as a guide/teacher during the first week or two
- ✳ This guide should be someone with an aptitude for teaching and leading who doesn't mind lending a hand, even for the small things

"Getting the basics right is so important. Having someone to meet the employees and show them around, stationery and desk organised and IT actually working on day one! These are the things that leave a lasting positive impression," Ms Sadler said.



Remember to familiarise your new recruits with the health and well-being perks too. (Source: Shutterstock)

Remember the well-being

Onboarding should not purely be about work, you have to remember health and well-being perks when talking to new employees. Modern workers prioritise their work-life balance and Ms Kochanski said employers have to highlight those key elements.

"Employees want to come into a cohesive team that has a good culture. Poor work culture really is one of the biggest things that affects us personally outside of work as well. No one wants to get up and go to a job when it's dragging you down," she said.

"THERE'S A BIG EMPHASIS ON WELL-BEING, NOT JUST AT WORK BUT AT HOME. YOU LOOK AT THE PAID DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE, IT'S MANDATORY AND IT REALLY SAYS TO EMPLOYEES 'YOU MATTER OUTSIDE OF WORK, YOU'RE NOT JUST A NUMBER.' IT'S ABOUT OVERALL WELL-BEING AND IT'S ABOUT AN EMPLOYER WORKING TO ENRICH THE LIVES OF THEIR EMPLOYEES."

Promoting your health and well-being focus during onboarding will make employees feel welcome. They need to know annual leave and well-being days are accessible, mental health support is on offer through the Employee Assistance Program, and that work does have fun elements. You can also provide balance by allocating downtime during onboarding, which will encourage new employees to grab a coffee, step outside, or reflect on their first week – which should be the first of many.



Cultivate a positive company culture with performance management

Performance management is the most important thing you can do for culture. There's nothing worse than working in an organisation where people have poor or counterproductive work behaviours or are underperforming, and no one does anything about it. If you allow it, it will become accepted behaviour at the organisation, and it will not only continue, it will snowball.

by Jason Binder, CEO, Respect Aged Care

My approach is to have ongoing conversations with employees. Where I have personally struck difficulty in my past is when I have delayed those conversations, because it ends up turning into a bigger issue that needs to be discussed. Delaying conversations is just kicking the can down the road but the eventual conversation builds up into a big one if you don't have little ones regularly. And remember to not make those conversations personal.

One of the things I often see managers struggle with is how to talk to people about performance when there is nothing concrete or any evidence that can be discussed. In those cases, I just simply ask the person "Is everything alright?". The answer opens a conversation about what you might be concerned about, but it's important to then not make accusations and genuinely ask the question.

When I was in Industrial Relations, a mentor told me that when he was a younger manager, one of his staff was underperforming, coming in late, calling in sick a lot, and being absent-minded at work. So he called him to a meeting and started addressing the behaviour when the employee broke down and revealed he had cancer. It's important from the outset to ask "Is everything okay? Because I noticed [x] is happening and it doesn't seem like you". If even the answer is yes, that's okay, sometimes the question is enough

for the person to realise people are noticing and they change their behaviour.

Nothing more needs to be said at that point. If they don't change and repeat the behaviour then you have an



Jason Binder, CEO Respect Aged Care (Source: Supplied)

opening, because if they do it again, you can say "remember we talked about [x]?" It's important again if there's no evidence and it's not clear-cut that you don't start accusing them. Let's say the person is rolling their eyes and making snide remarks in meetings. You can say, "Hey, I just need to ask again if everything is okay, because it looked like you were rolling your eyes in the meeting. You might not have meant it to come across this way, but it felt like when you said [x] that it was aggressive and there was anger behind it". You're not accusing them of anything, you're just saying what you perceived and how you feel.

Accusations are where conflict can start. If you're just asking about your observations, very rarely does anyone get upset. If it keeps happening after that, I'd say to them that "I keep noticing [x]



Have clear KPIs and expectations from your employees that suit their job description to support their career growth and give them direction. (Source: Shutterstock)

and it doesn't seem to be resolving. What are we going to do about it?". Next time it's not asking what we're going to do about it, it's "We need to have a formal meeting about it".

The best conversations I've had is where the employee has changed. I really respect that, and for me the demonstration of responsibility for feedback puts the person higher in my eyes than before the issue occurred. Someone self-reflecting and growing says a lot about their character and potential.

ONE OF THE THINGS I'VE PROBABLY NOT DONE WELL IS HAVE CLEAR KPIS AND EXPECTATIONS, WHICH SUITS SOME PEOPLE WHO ARE DRIVEN AND SELF-DIRECTED, BUT OTHERS PREFER MORE CLARITY. THAT'S SOMETHING WE'RE RUNNING THROUGH THE ORGANISATION NOW BECAUSE THE CLEARER YOU CAN BE ABOUT THE STANDARDS WE'RE AIMING FOR, THE LESS OBSCURITY THERE IS ABOUT PERFORMANCE.

One of the issues I see managers have is they find performance conversations uncomfortable. That's always going to be the case if you're new to it, because anything new is uncomfortable. It doesn't matter if it's the gym or skydiving, it's going to be uncomfortable at first but if you keep doing it, the uncomfortableness goes away. All successful people sucked at things first and it was uncomfortable for them. Jerry Seinfeld got boo'd off stage in his first gig, Eminem kept choking, and Oprah Winfrey

couldn't talk well on TV and got fired. The only way to get over the uncomfortableness is to keep doing it.

THE OTHER THING THAT HELPED ME EARLY ON WAS REALISING PEOPLE SACK THEMSELVES. ALL I'M DOING IS BRINGING UP ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS AND GIVING THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE THOSE ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS, AND IF THEY DON'T, THEY'RE SACKING THEMSELVES AND THAT'S COMPLETELY FAIR.

One of the biggest mistakes I see people make is they attach to an outcome. They think they need to meet with the person and they have to give them a warning or sack them. You can never possibly know that before you actually meet with them unless you have very good evidence that is beyond reasonable doubt. But when you attach to an outcome, you start visualising the meeting and how it must go and then feel a responsibility to control it just how you imagined. It's very stressful.

My advice is to just go into the meeting not knowing what's going to happen. If it's formal, provide the accusations and wait to see what they say. If it doesn't make sense, tell them it's not making sense to you along the way and point out why. If, in the end, it wasn't convincing, say you think the accusations are true. If I'm not 100% sure, I tell them that. I say, "I don't know 100% but I think [x] on the balance of probability. That's how it's presenting to me and so I have to take [x] action".

If it's informal, all I'm after is a conversation about my perceptions and feelings about the person's actions and that's usually enough to change them. You've just gotta have a conversation to understand what's going on. And if it's a formal meeting, explain what decision you're making and why.

I don't see performance management as a conflict. There's nothing I say in a performance meeting that could be a conflict. I've either got evidence of actions and behaviours – which is just talking about the facts and then making a decision after weighing up what they've said – or I'm saying what my perception is and how I feel, and asking them what they think. I've never had it go pear-shaped doing that.



Only a third of employees are happy to travel for work again

Recent findings suggest that a significant portion of employees are indeed thrilled to pack their suitcases and hit the road once more but the excitement of a new destination and the prospect of in-person interactions aren't too enticing to resist.

by **Sneha Krishnan**, Deputy Editor, HelloCare

After a long and challenging battle with the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is gradually returning to a semblance of normalcy. With travel restrictions stabilising and vaccination rates rising, the prospect of work-related travels is becoming a reality once again.

This leaves workers with two choices: to continue working remotely or to embrace the thrill of business travel once more.

ACCORDING TO AN OPINIUM SURVEY COMMISSIONED BY THE WORLD TRAVEL PROTECTION, 66% OF BUSINESS TRAVELLERS FEEL CAUTIOUS ABOUT RESUMING TRAVEL FOR WORK.

This sentiment might be attributed to health and safety concerns, as well as the realisation of the benefits and comforts of remote work during the pandemic. This shouldn't come as a surprise, as the world was isolated from society and were confined to their four walls for a very long time.



Very few businesses provide their employees with information they need to prepare for an emergency during a work trip. (Source: Shutterstock)

Travellers who have voiced their apprehensions on work trips are concerned about their health and well-being while commuting in today's times when compared to before the pandemic. Most have said they often experience anxiety and feel homesick.

Adding to that, flights and airlines have been experiencing severe staff shortages since the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to last minute cancellations and long-haul flights. Travellers have notably expressed their concerns over being stranded overseas in such situations, away from family and friends without clarity on their itinerary.

In reality, very few businesses provide their employees with the critical education and information they need to prepare for an emergency during an official trip. Less than three in 10 employees have stated that their employer has provided them with practical advice while travelling, including who to contact in an emergency or what to do in the event of an incident. And only a small majority of business travellers believe their employer would be able to help if they had an emergency or personal crisis while overseas.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SURVEY SUGGESTS THAT JUST A THIRD OF BUSINESS TRAVELLERS (33%) SAY THEY ARE HAPPY TO BE TRAVELLING FOR WORK AGAIN.

For those who thrive on new experiences, work-related travel offers a chance to explore new cities, cultures, and cuisines. Beyond the confines of a video call, face-to-face interactions enable better communication,

relationship-building, and the chance to make a lasting impression. Travelling for work fosters personal and professional growth, as it challenges individuals to adapt to different environments and situations.

The Comforts of Remote Work

While work-related travels are exciting, remote work has its charms too. The pandemic has demonstrated the feasibility and efficiency of remote work arrangements, allowing employees to maintain a better work-life balance and eliminating the need for daily commutes. Many have found that working from home enhances focus, creativity and productivity, as they have the freedom to create their ideal work environment.



Travellers who have voiced their apprehensions on work trips are concerned about their health and well-being (Source: Shutterstock)

The Appeal of Remote Work

Among those who prefer to continue remote work, the reasons are manifold. The flexibility to manage personal and professional commitments without the constraints of office hours is appealing. Remote work has also allowed employees to eliminate the stress of commuting, offering a better work-life balance.

Furthermore, remote work has shown that productivity and efficiency need not be compromised outside a traditional office setting. Employees appreciate the autonomy and trust given to them by their employers, which has resulted in increased job satisfaction and loyalty.

After years of working remotely, often from the comfort and convenience of a home office, this hardly seems a surprise. Today's travel landscape has never been more volatile, complex, or unpredictable, and it's trickier than ever to navigate the risks.

The Hybrid Work Model: Best of Both Worlds

In an attempt to recognise the best of both worlds, many companies are adopting a hybrid work model. This model combines remote work with periodic business travels. It allows employees to enjoy the benefits of working from home while still participating in in-person meetings and events when necessary.

Life after the COVID-19 pandemic offers exciting prospects for work-related travels and remote work. While the thrill of business travel beckons, the comforts and benefits of remote work are equally alluring.

With nearly 9-out-of-10 Australian businesses considering bringing in their workforce into the office full-time, workers will soon face the dilemma of choosing between commuting to the bustling CBD or continuing with the familiarity of working from the comfort of their homes.

IN A SURVEY THAT INCLUDED 300 HIRING MANAGERS, OVER 26% STATED THAT THEY WOULD WANT THEIR EMPLOYEES WORKING IN THE OFFICE FOUR DAYS A WEEK. WITH ONLY 2% STATING A 1-DAY WORKING FROM OFFICE MANDATE.

In the end, the decision rests with each individual based on their preferences, job roles and personal circumstances. Whether it's packing suitcases, joining forces in rush hour traffic or setting up a home office, the future looks promising and adventurous.



Addressing the epidemic of staff shortages in the aged care industry

by Sneha Krishnan, Deputy Editor, HelloCare

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped every facet of society, leaving an indelible mark on healthcare systems around the world. Australia's healthcare sector, while celebrated for its resilience, was not immune to the challenges posed by the pandemic. A significant and lasting consequence has been the acute shortage of healthcare staff, a crisis that continues to impact the nation's ability to provide timely and quality care.

Hello leaders sat down with Royal Freemasons' Benevolent Institution's Deputy CEO and Chief Financial Officer, James Shaw discuss the root causes of Australia's healthcare staff shortage, tracing its origins back to the COVID-19 pandemic, and explored the measures being taken to address this pressing issue.



James Shaw, Royal Freemasons' Benevolent Institution's Deputy CEO and Chief Financial Officer

While Australia's healthcare system has many strengths, it is not without its challenges. The health workforce includes over 700,000 registered medical practitioners, nurses, midwives, dentists and other allied health professionals. While this number continues to grow, so does the demand on the health system due to an ageing population with Australia's population of people aged 65 and above estimated to double by 2057.

Sneha Krishnan: What would you say was the defining factor in the aged care industry that led to the widespread staff shortages?

James Shaw: I would say that aged care was heavily impacted during the Covid outbreak as were other health services because they were at the front line of the pandemic. Even today our workers are going into residential care services, and they're still being required to wear masks for their entire shift. That places a burden on them and on our residents, it doesn't really help make a homely environment.

SK: How has the workforce shortage impacted the residents' lifestyles and care requirements?

JS: I guess the biggest issue is when we haven't been able to find permanent staff members to join our teams with the industries and we had to rely on agency staff to take up their place. However, the issue with agency staff is that the same staff member can come in today, but then a different staff member will come in tomorrow. Usually, each of our team members get to know the residents and they become part of the family that looks after that resident. They take the time to know what they're likes and dislikes are, they learn how they react at different times of the day, as well as other little nuances about the resident.

But if the staff member changes all the time, they don't get to see that because they don't build that rapport with them.

SK: Several providers are recruiting healthcare staff from overseas at the moment and we assume it must be a time consuming process.

What is the process like?

JS: There are two aspects to the recruitment process. The first aspect is sourcing staff and then we go through our normal recruitment. But then we have to place those staff members from overseas into our communities and accommodating them can be challenging. In regional New South Wales particularly, housing is in finite supply. Rents are very high and property prices are still relatively high at this point in time. So we have built and installed a number of container homes and have repurposed existing buildings to create accommodation on our sites. We have procured additional housing and then we've sourced and rented a number of properties and continue to do that.

SK: Has there been any backlash from local nurses and care staff regarding overseas recruitment?

JS: It certainly has been a process that we've learned as we've gone through the various inflow of overseas staff members so to speak. These staff members are not here to take away hours or to reduce reliance on our local or existing staff. This process helps us in filling those gaps, which enables providers to focus on the health and wellbeing of our existing workforce by reducing overtime and the reliance on a number of key staff members.

SK: Has the recent 15% pay increase been welcomed by staff members and do you think it has helped with staff retention?

JS: I would say it certainly has been welcomed. The cost of living pressures in the industry are immense being one of the lowest paid industries in Australia. It goes a long way to alleviating some of that financial pressure. In saying that, I think there's still more to be done for our workforce for those that did miss out on the pay hike. There have been concerns raised as to why they missed out and we went and provided them a 5% increase in July this year.



While Australia's healthcare system is gradually recovering from the initial shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, the healthcare staff shortage remains a persistent challenge. (Source: Shutterstock)

As for staff retention, before the pay increase was announced, we were seeing and hearing a lot of staff that were leaving the industry to go to other industries or to similar care settings that were paying additional and that rate was still higher than what the 15% was. But turnover rates have certainly decreased in the last six months and that has been our focus. We have rolled out a variety of different programs from employee benefit programs to wellness activities for our staff so they get the time to look after themselves too.

The Australian aged care sector might continue to rely on overseas recruitment in the years to come as we simply might not be able to generate enough workforce to care for our increasing ageing population with the new staffing regulations coming into effect. But providers seem to want to continue to rely on local recruits as they bring with them a feeling of community, especially in remote and regional aged care homes.

RFBI was founded in 1880 to assist those in need at a time when there were no Government funded social welfare programs. 143 years later, they still pride themselves in fulfilling this role through provision of aged care services, and through benevolence and annuity programs.

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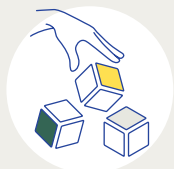
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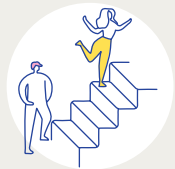
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Do English sounding names outperform ethnic names in job applications?

New research from the Monash Business School shows that glass ceilings exist and ethnic discrimination against six ethnic groups for leadership positions is particularly pronounced when recruiting.

by **Alex Jacobs**, *Journalist, hello leaders*

Lead researcher Professor Andreas Liebbrandt of the Department of Economics at Monash Business School said it is the first ever study that examines the issue amongst leadership.

How was the study conducted?

- ✳ Over 12,000 job applications were sent to over 4,000 job advertisements in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane to investigate hiring discrimination against six ethnic groups
- ✳ Jobs included leadership and non-leadership positions in 12 different occupations
- ✳ Each job received three identical resumes; one with an English name and two with non-English names (either Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Arabic, Chinese, English, Greek or Indian)

- ✳ All candidates were born in Australia, worked in Australia, went to an Australian school or university and had the required qualifications for the job

Despite providing identical resumes featuring qualified applicants, the results showed ethnic minorities received 57.4% fewer callbacks than English applicants for leadership positions. That figure was significantly higher than the results for non-leadership positions (45.3% fewer callbacks).

Overall, Arabic names received the lowest number of callbacks for leadership positions (9.7%), while Greek names were the most successful non-English demographic (14.3%).

Professor Andreas Liebbrandt of the Department of Economics at Monash Business School said the first-of-its-kind research supports the existence of pronounced discrimination in the recruitment of leadership positions.

“THEIR DECISION-MAKING COULD ALSO BE INFLUENCED BY STEREOTYPES AND GENERAL LEADERSHIP PROTOTYPES SO THAT THEY WOULD PREFER APPLICANTS WITH ENGLISH NAMES FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS,” PROFESSOR LIEBBRANDT SAID.

“This is consistent with Implicit Leadership Theory where recruiters focus on an ideal or typical leader that is likely to be successful in different contexts and refers to a general knowledge structure of typical leadership; if a leader’s characteristic matches a leadership prototype, a leader is evaluated as being a typical leader.”



Applicants with English names are more likely to receive callbacks than those with non-English names, new research says. (Source: Shutterstock)



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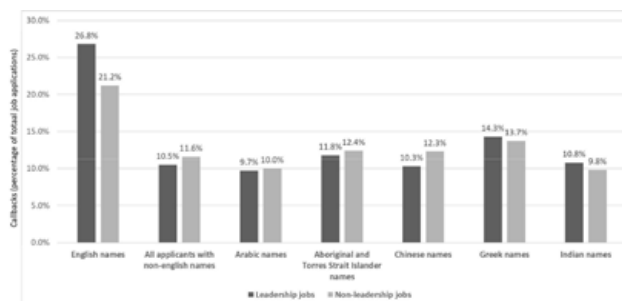
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decision makers in the aged care industry.

As part of the research, there was a clear focus on key traits in leadership and non-leadership positions, such as customer contact, individualism, creativity, innovation and learning. Twelve occupations were included in the study, such as accounting, human resource management and personal care assistant.

By looking at a cross-section of those traits and occupations, the researchers found customer contact did influence positive responses for leadership positions; applicants with English names received 19.5% more positive responses when direct customer engagement was involved in the job description.

One hypothesis is the belief that Australian recruiters believe Australian companies need a leader who matches the general leadership prototype. According to past research by Diversity Australia, roughly 95% of Australia's most senior roles are filled by people with either an Anglo-Celtic or European background. Therefore, going against the grain could be perceived as detrimental.

In addition, it appears decision-making could be influenced by stereotypes based purely on a name – and not upbringing – indicating



Note: N (leadership jobs): English = 358; Arabic = 134; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander = 136; Chinese = 155; Greek = 140; Indian = 148; non-English = 713; N (non-leadership jobs): English = 3736; Arabic = 1553; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander = 1562; Chinese = 1464; Greek = 1480; Indian = 1463; non-English = 7522

ethnic discrimination has not been removed from the workplace despite concerted efforts to increase diversity.

“While many organisations have successfully implemented diversity practices across the board they should also think about the context of leadership to increase the number of underrepresented groups in leadership positions,” Professor Leibbrandt said.

To deter future bias, Professor Liebbrant suggested using anonymous job applications during the first stage of the recruitment process to remove upfront bias. Meanwhile, he said recruiters could undergo further training to reduce ethnic discrimination and strengthen understanding of culturally endorsed leadership prototypes.

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Safe spaces a necessity for LGBTI elders to avoid opting out of aged care

by Alex Jacobs, *Journalist, hello leaders*

Although LGBTI inclusion in aged care is the strongest it's ever been, it does not mean aged care settings are seen as safe spaces for older LGBTI people. Many LGBTI elders have lived through varying periods of social and cultural transition and are still wary of revealing their sexual identity or entering aged care due to fear of discrimination.

Having grown up during a time when LGBTI people were arrested and jailed for their sexuality, older LGBTI people hold lingering concerns about entering institutionalised care settings. Personal experiences with electroshock or conversion therapy mean many also hold deep-rooted fears of medical and religious institutions – two sectors to which aged care has strong connections.



Rae and Theresa (Source LGBTIQ+ Health Australia)

With high levels of tension and fear, older LGBTI Australians often avoid aged care services until the last minute. They may even go back into the closet and hide their true selves from fellow residents and staff members for fear of discrimination, explained Robert Hardy, Director – Training and Capacity Building at LGBTIQ+ Health Australia.

“One of the main issues that creates a barrier to even accessing aged care services is the fear of discrimination and specific needs not being met. That means older LGBTI people are cautious to even look into care options based on a history of poor experiences accessing support services,” Mr Hardy said.

“There’s a low level of trust in general and in Australia, the aged care sector is dominated by religious-based providers so there can be another level of fear that they won’t be accepted for who they are. That can be quite damaging to mental health and well-being.”

THE 2021 CENSUS REPORTED THAT ONLY 5.6% OF OLDER AUSTRALIANS IDENTIFIED AS GENDER DIVERSE WHICH IS LIKELY TO BE AN UNDERREPRESENTATION DUE TO THEIR UNWILLINGNESS TO REPORT THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION.

Historically, the rates at which older LGBTI Australians have experienced abuse and/or have suffered from mental health issues is disparagingly high compared to the heterosexual community in the aged care sector. That’s why it’s essential for aged care providers to step up and visibly support, accommodate and encourage existing and future LGBTI residents.

Understand histories

Older LGBTI people will have their own personal experiences and unique histories based on family and community acceptance, and it's essential that any provider understands that. Too often a blanket statement of treating every resident equally can prove detrimental, explained Robert Hardy, Director – Training and Capacity Building at LGBTIQ+ Health Australia.

“It's really important that when we're caring for a person, that care is individualised for their needs. By understanding people's history we can then understand what their needs would be, particularly if an LGBTI person develops dementia. A history of trauma can be lived in the present,” Mr Hardy said.

“A deeper understanding of their history means you can put things in place to support the person particularly if there are changes in their behaviour which may be challenging for staff or family to deal with. For example, if someone had a history of conversion therapy, religious symbols in their room or around them could make them relive a very traumatic time in their life.”

Creating a supportive and welcoming environment for older LGBTI people will therefore help them feel safe about coming out in a new



Beatrice and Irene (Source LGBTIQ+ Health Australia)



Robert Hardy, Director – Training and Capacity Building at LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
(Source LGBTIQ+ Health Australia)

environment, rather than going back into the closet. But they will be looking for signs and signals indicating it's safe to come out, and that's something a provider has to facilitate.

Recognised LGBTI networks

The sudden move to an aged care setting could be daunting for LGBTI residents who fear backlash or conflict with residents holding contrasting views on sexual orientation and gender identity. It's therefore up to you and your staff to create and safely monitor an LGBTI-friendly environment.

From personal experience, Mr Hardy has spoken to providers that have said they work to the assumption there are no LGBTI older people receiving care or services. He said the exact opposite has to happen.

“We want providers to assume there are LGBTI people using their services because we know they are, but it's most likely they just don't feel safe to come out. But we've had aged care organisations do the training and then hold a morning tea for pride month and by the end of it LGBTI people have come out or disclosed themselves as a result. Little things can go a long way,” Mr Hardy said.

Establishing an internal LGBTI support group is one way to support residents looking for a safe space. A social group means they can instantly connect with fellow LGBTI residents, allies or staff members. Additionally, look to external organisations and LGBTI networks providing

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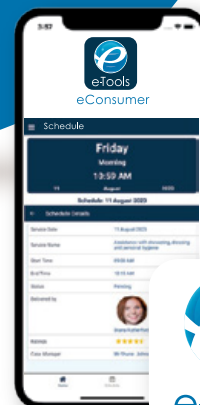
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Including pronoun options in emails, or gender-neutral language in promotional materials, is a small step towards creating an inclusive aged care environment. (Source: Shutterstock)

visitor services and social events outside of an aged care setting. Examples include Out and About/Switchboard (Victoria), ACON (New South Wales) and the Queensland Council for LGBTI Health.

Modern policies

All organisations should have existing policies promoting equality, diversity and inclusion amongst residents and staff. However, in an evolving world, it's important to reevaluate policies to ensure they meet the current needs of the LGBTI community. Policies have to dig deeper into the needs of older LGBTI people rather than providing a surface-level explanation of acceptance.

ONE POSITIVE STEP AGED CARE PROVIDERS CAN TAKE IS BY INCORPORATING RELEVANT TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS INTO THEIR ONBOARDING AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES.

"From the leaders in the organisation to those at the coal face delivering services, training can just start off small. It could start off with some E-learning; even one hour can go a long way to opening up people's awareness," Mr Hardy explained.

Other steps providers can take include:

- ✳ Replacing outdated terminology with accepted wording. For example, although LGBTIQ+ Health Australia feature 'queer' as part of their title, they recognise the term has negative connotations for older people as it was a derogatory term, and so LGBTI is their preferred reference for older people.

- ✳ Reinforcing organisational policies and practices to better support same-sex couples entering aged care, or LGBTI residents with chosen families, i.e. an older person who may have transitioned or come out later in life and no longer has contact with their biological family.
- ✳ Creating confidential and inclusive forms asking the right questions to source relevant information in regard to gender and sexuality.
- ✳ Promoting inclusive language among staff communications, including emails, as well as promotional or official materials and documents.

Where to start

Whether you're just starting a journey to better inclusion, or you want to strengthen your current policies and initiatives, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia has relevant resources and references on their website, including the Silver Rainbow program. There are training partners located in each State and Territory to provide direct assistance. Meanwhile, the Department of Health's Diversity Action Plan for Aged Care, ACON and Rainbow Health Australia's Rainbow Tick program are other leading resources for aged care providers ready to strengthen their LGBTI services.



In an evolving world, it's important to reevaluate policies to ensure they meet the current needs of the LGBTI community. (Source: Shutterstock)



DIVERSITY

Is Australia's future aged care workforce international?

by Alex Jacobs, *Journalist, hello leaders*

Is the success of Australia's future aged care workforce going to rely on foreign workers to meet demand? With local workforce challenges, it looks likely, and providers are already tapping into the international market – some having done for many years – with instant benefits.

- ✳ Workforce projections indicate the aged care sector is facing major shortfalls in all areas.
- ✳ Currently, aged care needs 11,800 more Registered Nurses and 13,000 care workers to meet current reforms, such as the 24/7 RN requirements and mandatory 200 care minute quotas.
- ✳ By 2031–32, the aged care workforce will be nearly 130,000 workers short; by 2049–50 it will be over 210,000 workers short.

Those figures paint a dark picture despite the positive hues of the 15% award wage increase for nurses. While there may be more money in aged care, the workforce capacity required is not available. And in many cases aged care is just catching up to better-paying hospital and healthcare wages for nurses.



With the local talent pool already stretched to its limits, will international workers become a more integral part of aged care in the future? (Source: Shutterstock)

That's why aged care providers and the Government have turned to foreign shores to find workers. The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme was extended to include aged care employers, while the Aged Care Labour Agreement gives participating providers priority access to prospective migrant workers through fast-tracked Temporary Skill Shortage visas.

Luke Greive, CEO of Infinite Care, is well-versed in accessing the international talent pool. Infinite has its own dedicated international strategy for bringing RNs to Australia, all of which he said have instantly impacted resident care and satisfaction.

"WITH THE GROWING PRESSURE TO HAVE A SUFFICIENT WORKFORCE TO SUPPORT RESIDENT CONTINUITY OF CARE, LOOKING BEYOND AUSTRALIAN SHORES HAS BECOME CRITICAL. THIS [RECRUITMENT OF RNS] HAS ADDED A RICH TAPESTRY OF EXPERIENCE AND BACKGROUNDS TO OUR TEAM AND HOMES ACROSS AUSTRALIA," MR GREIVE SAID.

"Due to the impending gaps in resourcing in the Australian aged care sector, it is important we have kind and compassionate individuals... That is our first focus and while we have a qualification assessment matrix, we are prepared to invest heavily to ensure we help everyone build a career pathway and upskill."

International recruitment has typically been viewed as a top-up solution for aged care. If gaps exist, migrant workers can fill them. Yet with ongoing relocation and housing challenges, it could be a first-choice solution for providers receiving low-quality applications in a shallow talent pool.

For Respect Aged Care, who tapped into the PALM Scheme earlier in the year to recruit 11 Fijian workers for its Wangaratta home, St John's, their first foray into international recruitment has strengthened their ability to meet non-nursing care minute quotas.

“WE BELIEVE AN INITIATIVE LIKE THE PALM SCHEME IS ONE OF THE WAYS WE CAN HELP SUPPORT RURAL AND REGIONAL AGED CARE HOMES CONTEND WITH CURRENT STAFFING AND WORKFORCE CHALLENGES FACING THE INDUSTRY,” CEO & MANAGING DIRECTOR JASON BINDER SAID.

“Our 11 new personal care assistants have continued to settle in well and it’s a testament to the team and culture at St John’s for the way they have welcomed our new team members, as well as supported them during the transition. Since their arrival, our new colleagues are being accommodated on-site which has further allowed them to integrate with not only our aged care residents but also those living in our retirement villages.”

Both Infinite and Respect have clear strategies for their international recruitment, offering additional training and support to ensure staff hold relevant Australian qualifications and introducing workers to local communities. This is especially important in regional and remote locations that many metropolitan nurses are often unwilling to relocate to.

But with long-term placements on offer, continuity of care and local relationships are prioritised. Infinite strengthens this by supporting the relocation of families, while Respect ensured shared values would benefit both parties.

“During the recruitment process, the Fijian care workers spoke about the professional opportunities available to them, and the great experience they will gain from working in our aged care sector. And for us, it’s one way we can help alleviate some of the current staffing and workplace pressures impacting our homes,” Mr Binder said.

“There is a natural fit between Fijian culture and Respect’s current values. We’re confident each will contribute to our team’s ability to continue



Respect’s 11 Fijian aged care workers from the PALM Scheme (Source Respect)

to deliver great care to our residents and contribute to the broader community more generally.”

With new pathways to bring in migrant workers, a clear strategy is required. In some circumstances, providers aren’t always in a position of power, which is why

unique approaches can offer more opportunities. Under the Aged Care Labour Agreement, providers need to sign a memorandum of understanding with their relevant trade union to gain access to migrant workers.

WORKERS ARE INDUCTED THROUGH THE UNION WITHOUT PROVIDER MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATION (UNLESS INVITED) WHILE A NUMBER OF OTHER KEY REQUIREMENTS ARE INVOLVED IN THE DEAL. ALTHOUGH THEY DO PROVIDE PLENTY OF BENEFITS FOR WORKERS, IT’S NOT NECESSARILY AN ENTICING SET-UP FOR AGED CARE OPERATORS ALREADY DEALING WITH GOVERNMENT MANDATED REQUIREMENTS.

For organisations experiencing workforce challenges, non-traditional methods of recruitment are going to become more common. Mr Grieve recognised the Government’s need to keep pace with evolving recruitment trends, including offering streamlined visa processing, while he said businesses need to be proactive and not encumbered by lengthy negotiations.

“The changing nature and workforce shortages across the country demands that all providers consider alternative and multichannel talent acquisition strategy. There will not be enough local resources in the Australian market so finding resources from other countries will have to form part of a strategy to ensure ongoing continuity of care for our residents,” Mr Grieve explained.

“It is important there is a clear strategy and a high level of support around mobilising and relocating team members from different countries. It can be very daunting to uproot your life and family and come to somewhere that you have perhaps never visited before. Ensuring adequate ongoing support to ensure well-being and support to assimilate into the organisation and the wider community is important.”



Luke Grieve, CEO of Infinite Care (Source: Supplied)



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Unmasking challenges: Aged care compliance vs. consumer experience

by Jakob Neeland, *Carepage*

In April 2023, the inaugural collection phase commenced for the expanded National Aged Care Mandatory Quality Indicator Program (NQIP), introducing the novel Quality of Life (QOL) and Consumer Experience (QCE) Indicators. These indicators demand a distinct data collection approach, involving feedback acquisition from residents or their proxies. However, executing these new Indicators has posed considerable challenges for aged care providers.

Initial hurdles for providers centred around devising efficient data collection methods, yet many encountering this journey raised grievances regarding government-mandated surveys.

Notably, CarePage, a leading aged care data software company, in collaboration with major residential care providers, has observed that client concerns reverberate across the sector.

A predominant concern expressed by providers revolves around QOL and QCE surveys being perplexing for aged care residents. Despite a leaning toward digital surveying, the surveys' paper-based design conflicts with web usability. Consequently, resident autonomy in survey completion diminishes, necessitating additional staff intervention and potentially compromising accuracy. The absence of space for supplementary comments further contributes to the predicament, presenting numerical scores devoid of context. This omission hinders providers from comprehending issues underlying low scores.

The 'I have good social relationships with family and friends' query within the QOL survey has evoked mixed reactions. This enquiry's subjective nature often elicits negative emotional responses, leading to survey abandonment and skewed response patterns. The query's external locus of control also demoralises staff, given their inability to influence personal relationships.

Another challenge lies in the inability to skip questions, resulting in detrimental effects on providers' overall scores. For instance, the assumption in the question 'When I experience pain, it is well managed', poses issues for pain-free residents. Inability to bypass this query inadvertently incentivises positive responses from staff proxies, distorting accuracy and introducing survey bias.

Crucially, the exclusion of non-English translations for both QOL and QCE surveys is perplexing in a multicultural landscape. Over 20% of aged care residents hail from non-English-speaking origins, with overseas-born staff forming a significant workforce segment.

WHILE GOVERNMENT SURVEY MANDATES REVEAL SUBSTANTIAL SCOPE FOR ENHANCEMENT, THE PRESSING NEED FOR UNBIASED, INDEPENDENT SURVEYING REMAINS PARAMOUNT.

In navigating the challenges presented above, providers can take proactive steps to ensure a comprehensive and insightful understanding of their residents' experiences. Beyond the mandated 12 questions, providers can bolster their feedback strategies to extract nuanced insights that drive continuous improvement.

CarePage's co-designed, sector first QI Resident module exemplifies this approach. By supporting providers with the collection of more than 48,000 unique QOL/QCE resident responses in the Apr-Jun quarter, the software has enabled many providers to not only meet mandatory requirements but also delve deeper into their resident experiences.

By embracing supplementary questions and best practice CX metrics, providers can elevate their understanding of residents', driving tailored service enhancements and informed decision-making.

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How is AI transforming HR?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly developing and its role in the corporate sphere is revolutionary.

by **Bianca Iovino**, *Journalist, hello leaders*

AI has begun revamping the way Human Resources (HR) professionals work – In fact, people working in HR have already begun adopting ways to incorporate AI into their systems and processes. AI is already being used in the space to automate time-consuming tasks like payroll and employee screening but it is also being used to create new policies, contracts, job descriptions and future planning.

While AI can be a huge help, Jordan Wang, Director of training and consultancy organisation Dale Carnegie Australia emphasised the need for a healthy balance between technology and the vital “humanness” people play in HR instead of a system of replacing staff with tech.

“While AI holds promise, it can’t replicate the multifaceted essence of humanity. The future, with all its uncertainties and breakthroughs, hinges on the human ability to embrace change, adapt and lead with compassion – the trump card held by HR,” he explained.

“By prioritising the human aspect of AI implementation, organisations can maximise benefits while minimising disruptions and resistance.”

We live in a world where tech is rapidly developing and its benefits should be considered in an industry that is struggling to recruit and retain employees. 76% of HR leaders believe that if their organisation does not adopt and implement AI solutions in the next 12 to 24 months they will be lagging in organisational success compared to those that do.

1. Workforce planning

Founder and Director of recruitment and consultancy organisation Above and Beyond Group, Laura Sutherland, said the daily life of an HR professional is getting bogged down with “reactive firefighting” when the priority needs to be put back to more proactive planning.

“Let’s face it – the aged care workforce is in crisis in our sector, which means HR is overwhelmed and often under-resourced and unable to get strategically ahead of the game,” she said.

“If we embrace AI for more of the things we don’t want to do in HR then we will in turn upskill HR to more meaningful, strategic, sustainable, and impactful work.”

An AI-driven strategy can not only ease the workload of HR professionals but allows for better future planning and thus, create an improved employee experience overall. This tech allows you to analyse data such as current workforce skills, industry trends, and company growth plans and predict which roles they might need to fill in the next year.

2. Recruitment

AI is helping those working in HR attract staff and find the best person for the job.

Some AI systems and even ChatGPT have helped companies source candidates, analyse resumes and pair them with job descriptions and schedule interviews.

Mr Wang said organisations such as Hilton have used AI to reduce their hiring timeline from 43 days to five days. Dale Carnegie Australia recently published a report *AI in the Workplace* exploring how AI will shape the HR space into the future.

“HR leaders can integrate AI into both business strategy and daily operations as they consider talent management, and data and tech capability building,” he explained.

These aids not only streamline HR to avoid human error or decision fatigue but the automation saves hours of time which can be spent doing more person-centric tasks. Ms Sutherland agreed. She said using AI for higher volume frontline roles that have historically chewed up a lot of time on



AI is increasingly being used in HR to help drive decisions about hiring, retention and employee development. (Source: Shutterstock)

first-stage screening and vetting applicants can be powerful.

“The key to doing this well with AI is with higher level HR and operational leadership skills combined with writing more meaningful position descriptions and selection criteria so that AI can be set up for success to screen for the real requirements that employers are looking for,” she said.

“Although, you’ll still need that connection, chemistry and culture fit element of the selection process which needs human involvement, human judgement, reactive listening, and empathy.”

3. Performance reviews

AI has also proved to be a useful tool for those in HR who need to keep track of employee performance and personal reviews.

AI allows those in HR to track and analyse employee performance data throughout the year. This data can help generate individual reports for employees, giving an overview of strengths, weaknesses and progress. This can then create personalised learning and development for employees to ensure your future workforce is sufficiently educated and trained.

Ms Sutherland said leaning on AI in this way takes the memory searching and guesswork out of the review process, making it more objective and fair to employees.

“This can only work if, again, the HR and operational leaders’ human input is stepped up [...] Each role type needs clearly articulated success measures or KPIs, so that AI is able to do its part of the job,” she said.

“This doesn’t happen very well across our sector for various role types currently.”

4. Employee engagement

HR teams often struggle to gauge employee sentiment accurately but have you considered an AI-powered survey tool?

With this tool, you can generate short, engaging surveys to employees that facilitate honest and anonymous feedback. As a result, trends and areas of concern are then identified, providing HR teams with the insights they need to improve employee satisfaction and engagement.

“Employee retention is probably the challenge that’s hurting employers the most right now,” Ms Sutherland said.

“Most organisations now use these AI survey tools in our sector which is great progress. However, we still need human element involvement – from question design to setting impactful actionable recommendations about what to do with the insights from the data and how.”

Another option could be an AI chatbot that serves as a 24/7 HR assistant. This system allows employees to ask the chatbot questions about leave policies and benefits and receive answers instantly while the HR team focuses on strategic tasks.

5. Onboarding/offboarding processes

New hires can often feel overwhelmed with the initial paperwork and wrapping their head around procedures and processes. But AI can help in that space too with an intuitive onboarding tool.

Onboarding AI tools offer guidance in step form which cover important aspects such as documents, company policies and even initial training sessions. This process helps new employees feel more at ease and are likely to digest material better.

“Organisations with strong onboarding processes improve new hire retention by 82% and productivity by over 70%,” Mr Wang said.

Similarly, AI tools can manage exit surveys, return of company property and other offboarding tasks when employees leave your organisation, ensuring a smooth transition for both parties.

AI can seem like a scary development in the world of technology but instead of running away from it, we should be looking at how we can use it to our advantage and improve the sector. With reform at the forefront of the minds of industry stakeholders, consider how AI can improve the functionality of your HR department and thus, your organisation as a whole.



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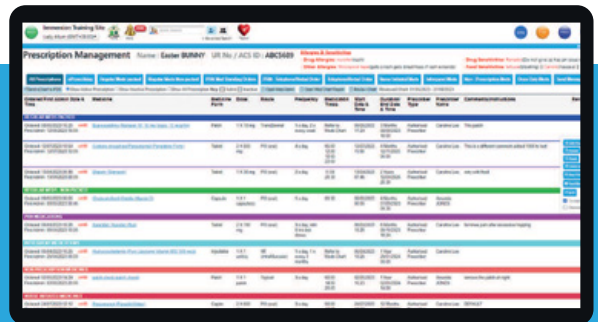
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TECHNOLOGY

Balancing tech investments with person-centred care

by Alex Jacobs, *Journalist, hello leaders*

Aged care providers are continuing to adopt new technologies, computer programs and applications to help streamline reporting and meet compliance requirements in light of major reforms. But as those advancements take place, no one should lose sight of person-centred care and the role it plays in the design and development of modern programs.

That approach has been the driving force for not-for-profit provider, Community Vision, which focused on better customer outcomes when developing its own software – via Salesforce – for use across the organisation. Yvonne Timson, Community Vision Chief Executive Officer, said they wanted a system that empowered staff and consumers by investing in their independence, quality of care and choice.

“You have to carry multiple goals all the time; we are a customer-centric business, so what are we doing to ensure we are providing the care and support for the consumer in the best way possible and not letting the system dictate what care they get?” Ms Timson said.

“The technology also makes it easier for our staff to deliver care. You can’t be a customer-centric business by not putting your staff first so it’s really important they find technology that enables them and doesn’t get in the way.”

“IF YOU HAVE A SYSTEM WHERE YOU NEED 43 CLICKS TO DO ANYTHING, PEOPLE ARE GOING TO FIND THE WORKAROUND, THEY’RE NOT GOING TO FOLLOW THE RULES. THAT’S WHEN YOUR QUALITY AND YOUR COMPLIANCE GO DOWN AND YOU START HAVING ISSUES.”

It was clear from the very beginning that Community Vision required a program that could cater to a wide audience. Their community care services branch across the

aged care, disability and daycare spectrums. Therefore, person-centred care was always crucial and Ms Timson felt it was best to have complete control over the development of any new systems.

“BUSINESSES HAVE TO PREPARE FOR THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE IF THEY’RE GOING TO BE SUSTAINABLE. THAT IS SO MUCH EASIER IF YOU’RE PUTTING THE CUSTOMER IN THE CENTRE OF WHAT YOU DO,” MS TIMSON EXPLAINED.

“As for technology vendors, they’re not the ones who work with our customers all the time, sometimes they’re not as passionate about ensuring people are independent and have a purpose for life for as long as possible. We hold that passion so we know what needs to be done for our customers and for our business.”



A focus on person-centred care should remain when designing or implementing new tech.

(Source: Shutterstock)



Yvonne Timson, CEO of home care services provider Community Vision. (Source: Supplied)

Consumers and staff share the rewards

Accessibility is integral to the success of any piece of technology, whether it's a computer application or assistive technology. Staff and consumers alike must have some control over the programs around them. The focus on person-centred care during the program's design and development means they're not just ticking boxes for compliance, but also reducing the administrative burden on staff

"We keep talking about having to do more with less. We're comfortable with additional compliance but we know it comes at a cost. Whether that's from an administrative burden or additional management cost, it's an additional cost to the business," Ms Timson said.

"AGED CARE IS IN A VERY TIGHT MARGIN ENVIRONMENT AND MOST ORGANISATIONS ARE ACTUALLY BORDERING ON LOSING MONEY. EFFICIENCY AND LETTING SYSTEMS DO THE HEAVY LIFTING WITH ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN IS CRITICAL TO OUR VIABILITY."

Other key capabilities of the self-designed software include:

- ✳ Financial management and invoicing
- ✳ Staff productivity tracking and support
- ✳ Auto-generated reports related to Quality Indicators and all compliance/auditing requirements

- ✳ Real-time reporting of incidents and hazards, including the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS)
- ✳ Customer categorisation based on care needs and relevant aged care and disability levels

Ms Timson said her staff at Community Vision are building stronger relationships with customers as they feel more empowered when designing and delivering care plans that meet their exact needs. As a result, customers are also enjoying the benefits of being directly involved with their care plans - an important part of person-centred care.

"EMPLOYEES HAVE ALL INFORMATION AND IF THEY'VE SPOTTED A CHANGE OR A DECLINE THEY CAN RING UP A MANAGER OR ONE OF THE CLINICAL TEAMS STRAIGHT AWAY AND ACTUALLY KNOW THEY'VE MADE A REAL POSITIVE DIFFERENCE BY POTENTIALLY PREVENTING A HARMFUL INCIDENT," SHE SAID.

"You hear people saying 'I'm not good with computers' but then you see staff with their iPad, sitting with the customer and showing them things. They're the most amazing, inspirational people, almost teachers with our customers. We even have customers in their 80s and 90s, who also try and teach our staff because they love the computer. They love keeping themselves and their brains active."



The focus on person-centred care during the program's design and development means they're not just ticking boxes for compliance, but also reducing the administrative burden on staff.

(Source: Shutterstock)



TECHNOLOGY

Does aged care data collection require some pause and reflection?

by Sneha Krishnan, Deputy Editor, HelloCare

Having been a part of the aged care sector for over 20 years, he has not only learnt the nitty gritty of the healthcare industry, but has also become a compassionate and dedicated leader.

As a young boy, Adam Holcroft grew up in the coastal region of Wollongong in NSW, a place he describes to be very close to his heart. He pursued his Information Technology degree from the University of Wollongong in 1998 and began his professional journey with QPS Benchmarking in its infancy. Adam said it was a privilege to witness and steer the transformation of the business and was involved in the creation of an inhouse web development team which was formed to revolutionise the delivery of benchmarking services to their clients.

Adam explained that his journey into martial arts was a key factor in guiding him through his professional life. "My journey into Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) mirrors my professional life," he said. "The challenge to improve and better myself drove me to compete and test my skills. With time, not only did I participate in rigorous competitions, but I also transitioned into a teaching role."

"It's in these classes that I resonate most with my leadership style – it's about nurturing, guiding and setting an example. Both on the mat and in the boardroom, I've learned the essence of resilience, strategic thinking, and adaptability."

SO WHAT DROVE ADAM TO APPLY HIS SKILLS TO THE AGED CARE SECTOR?

His affinity for the elderly comes from a personal place – the deep respect and love he holds for his grandparents. "The invaluable moments I spent with my grandparents, their tales, wisdom and warmth, instilled in me a profound respect for the elderly. Their influence made me realise the pressing need for compassionate and dedicated professionals in the sector, leading me to direct my professional energies here," he added.



Adam Holcroft sporting his brown belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (Source: Supplied)

Hello leaders sat down with Adam to get his insights on the implementation of the Star Ratings and the recent expansion of the National Aged Care Mandatory Quality Indicator Program (QI Program).

A jumpy start for the Star Rating System

The first two submissions of data for star ratings haven't filled the sector with confidence.

After the first round of Star Ratings were published in December 2022 there were questions about the accuracy of the data, and the publishing of the latest round was delayed due to "an issue" in the new Government Provider Management System (GPMS) affecting some quality measures ratings available for preview.

In an attempt to fix the existing loopholes, the GPMS replaces the current 20-year old National Approved Provider System (NAPS).

The Department of Health and Aged Care has agreed to an initial two-year deal with American cloud-based software company Salesforce worth \$13.5 million, according to a contract notification published in May this year. The contract, which runs through to the end of January 2025, was agreed through the DTA's cloud marketplace.

In a webinar held earlier in the year, a representative of the Department said, "It's a big foundational piece of work that will help to support the delivery of many of the initiatives that we're running."

“The new quality indicators are robust [...] there’s an impending challenge of survey fatigue. In the initial phases, aligning staff to understand and meet collection requirements was a challenge. But challenges, as I’ve always believed, are opportunities in disguise,” he said.

The benefit of the star ratings is aimed at consumers and their families so that they can make informed care decisions.

“WHILE A 5-STAR RATING SYSTEM HAS ITS MERITS, I BELIEVE THAT IMPORTANT CLINICAL MEASURES NEED A MORE NUANCED REPRESENTATION TO CONSUMERS.”

“I do have some concern about the potential for the Star Ratings to misrepresent provider performance, however, we are only in the initial phase. I expect that with greater industry involvement, the system will evolve into one that can be effective and efficient on all sides,” he added.

QI Program – A necessity for sector growth

The QI Program was designed to provide transparency and information on the quality of care provided to residents in aged care facilities. It aimed to collect data on various quality indicators related to areas such as clinical care, medication management, and resident well-being.

“As a result of the Royal Commission into Aged Care, one of the recommendations that came out was Quality Indicators, that were to be made mandatory across the country and then a system was developed to cater to this,” said Adam.

The quality indicators refer to measurable standards and benchmarks used to assess and monitor the quality of care provided in residential aged care facilities. These indicators cover a wide spectrum of aspects, including clinical care, medication management, resident well-being and overall safety. By quantifying these elements, the QI Program offers a standardised and objective way to evaluate the performance of aged care facilities and identify areas that need improvement.

In April 2023, the Government added a further six indicators of care to the existing quality indicators. These included hospitalisation, incontinence care, workforce and quality of life among others.

But is the sector benefiting from the indicators and is the Government using the data to rectify the issues that are being highlighted in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety?

“The new quality indicators, especially the survey-centric ones, are robust. While the intent is to amplify voices and collect qualitative data, there’s an impending challenge of survey fatigue. In the initial phases, aligning staff to understand and meet collection requirements was a challenge.

But challenges, as I’ve always believed, are opportunities in disguise. They stimulate growth and demand innovation, and that’s the path we are committed to,” he said.

With increasing compliance reporting being added to the sector’s workload which is already struggling with severe staff shortages, what role do these measures play in improving the quality of aged care?

Corrective action required to reduce staff turnover

“The question I always have is, looking at figures is one thing, but what can we do about figures? I think it is great to measure and to analyse, but we need some corrective actions available for the workforce,” he added.

“Workforce is such an interesting thing to discuss at the moment. It’s probably one of the main subjects in this added [new] list of indicators,” said Adam.

“The question I always have is looking at figures is one thing, but what can we do about figures? I think it is great to measure, to analyse, but we need some corrective actions available for the workforce,” he added.

A National Skills Commission report from earlier this year said demand for care staff would rise by over 40% over the next four years but would still not be met by enough working-aged Australians. It is expected that there will be a dearth of over 54,000 care staff members in both the aged care and the disability sectors with roughly 50,000 nursing positions vacant.

Adam concluded by saying, “The workforce domain remains a critical area in the aged care sector. Post-Covid-19, turnover rates unfortunately haven’t shown improvement. The sector faced an influx of retirements, wage-related challenges and cross-sector poaching. It’s time we revisit our strategies and prioritise the betterment of our aged care workforce.”

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OPINION

The demise of Australian residential aged care

by **Dr Rodney Jilek** RN, MPH, PhD, DrPH, Adjunct Professor, University of Canberra and Managing Director of Community Home Australia



Adjunct Professor,
University of Canberra
and Managing
Director of Community
Home Australia.

The year 1997 presented the Australian aged care sector with a promising future moving away from a disjointed cottage industry to a professional social services sector with the introduction of the Aged Care Act 1997 and an accreditation regime that promoted excellence and continuous improvement. This was reinforced with the Ministerial Awards for Excellence and annual Better Practice conferences held by the Aged Care Accreditation Agency.

Given the findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (2018–2021), it is abundantly apparent that the sector has changed dramatically, and not always for the better. As the sector lurches from disaster to disaster and media scrutiny continues to highlight repeated and seemingly more serious shortcomings, it is important to critically analyse what has gone wrong. While the pre-1997 cottage industry had its own fair share of issues, is the corporate, property development focused “consumer” sector any better? I would argue we have actually gone backwards, and the benefits previously gained through a community based, small scale sector have been lost in the mass production, mediocre inspiring, economies of scale driven market.

Over a career spanning 30 years, I can identify two major failings that contribute to the majority of issues that have plagued the sector – the abject failure of the regulatory framework and

Australia’s prevalent absence of respect and value for our Elders.

The regulatory system has moved from one that rewarded excellence and actively encouraged innovation and improvement to one where reaching the basic minimum standard has become the goal, a goal that is regularly and repeatedly unattained by many providers. As a Director of Nursing, failure of even a single accreditation outcome was a personal failure that was followed by a deep sense of embarrassment. Now there is almost an expectation of failure in this new world of learned helplessness which has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. I regularly now hear senior executives dismiss the failure of 5, 10 even 20 of the 42 requirements of accreditation as nothing more than a minor aberration, almost an expected outcome.

Previously, homes that failed their accreditation were placed on strict timeframes to address the concerns and the regulatory agencies and appointed sanctions advisors worked together to ensure the safety of those in care. Sadly, those days are long gone and now homes can sit in a “monitoring” holding pattern for months and years, remaining non-compliant with the minimum standards yet able to continue operating unfettered by regulatory action. Where timeframes are set, these can pass without compliance being reached and are simply “archived” to the bookshelves of a forgotten land.

The failure of regulation is the single most destructive force that has contributed to the widespread failures of the sector. But how has this been allowed to happen?

UNLIKE MANY CULTURES AROUND THE WORLD, OUR ELDERS ARE NOT REVERED AND SERVED AND DESPITE THE STEADY INFLUX OF MIGRANTS FROM THESE COUNTRIES, OUR PREVALENT DISMISSAL OF OLDER AUSTRALIANS CONTINUES UNABATED.

The other thing that hasn't changed is the overwhelming 'whiteness' of our politicians and the SES of the public service, especially in health and social services. Maybe the lack of cultural diversity, particularly from cultures who have a deep respect for their Elders is something worth exploring further. I certainly did not experience the same level of disconnection when working with the Muslim communities of Sydney or the many CALD communities who have engaged my consulting services over the decades. Each of these communities had a prevalent 'Elder First' philosophy that was evident in everything they did, and which is conspicuously absent from the rest of Australian culture.

AUSTRALIA COULD LEARN A LOT FROM THESE COMMUNITIES. HOW IS IT THAT AUSTRALIA DEINSTITUTIONALISED PEOPLE LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND DISABILITY FOLLOWING THE WATERSHED RICHMOND REPORT IN 1983, YET IN 2023 WE CONTINUE TO INSTITUTIONALISE OUR CITIZENS SIMPLY BECAUSE OF THEIR AGE?

Even following the strengthening of community-based disability support with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme 10 years ago and public pledges by politicians that Australian living with disability will not be forced into nursing homes once they hit the ripe old age of 65, we continue to see this occurring through opaque and clandestine policy enacted by the NDIA.

The current Aged Care Minister, Anika Wells, will have us believe the Albanese government's package of reforms will fix the ailing sector. I don't doubt she herself believes that. I also don't doubt that the people advising the Minister, the same people who have been sitting at the decision-making tables for the past 20+ years agree with her because dissenting views are not welcome in this country. The fact that I am delivering at four intentional conferences this year but have been silenced in Australia for more than five years is testament to the power of the aged care cartel.

Minimum staffing ratios that ignore key groups of employees and which have been introduced without thought of the actual practicalities of implementation will not automatically improve the delivery of aged care services. A star rating system is so woefully inconsistent that, the home where 95-year-old Mrs Clare Nowland was tasered by police for walking with a walking



Unfortunately, the sad truth is that a significant proportion of this country do not value our Elders.
(Source: Shutterstock)

frame carrying a knife and died as a result, is still rated with 4 stars. This shows that the facility is supposedly of higher quality than the vast majority of homes in this country. If this is what the Minister believes is transparency and empowering consumers, then God help us all. Given we spend approximately half that of comparable OECD nations of the care and support of our ageing population, and spent nearly double on incarcerating criminals than aged care, isn't it time we seriously stopped tinkering around the edges, fund the sector appropriately, openly encourage non-institutional models and simultaneously put into place a regulatory body and system that is objective, consistent, experienced, knowledgeable, competent and which drives excellence beyond substandard mediocrity so our vulnerable Elders are supported, cared for and respected?

Dr Rodney Jilek is a former Clinical Advisor to the Department of Health and Ageing and has over 30 years' experience in managing and delivering aged care services in Australia. Community Home Australia is the country's first non-institutional specialist younger onset dementia service located in Canberra, ACT. He regularly contributes to the international ageing community through publications, consulting, research and conference presentations.

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How to find a suitable aged care home

Choosing the right aged care home for yourself or a loved one must be one of the most difficult and confronting things any of us will ever have to do.

By Bina Brown, Director, Third Age Matters

Choosing the right aged care home for yourself or a loved one must be one of the most difficult and confronting things any of us will ever have to do.

Often the move is initiated under pressure and or in a situation fraught with sadness, anxiety and confusion.

Even with careful planning, just knowing where to start and what to look for can be challenging. Unfortunately, the process can be made more difficult by the gatekeeping behaviour of staff at some aged care homes.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE EVERYTHING – THE FEEL, THE LOOK AND THE SMELL OF THE PLACE. BUT IT IS VERY HARD TO GET THE FEEL OF AN AGED CARE FACILITY IF YOU CAN'T GET THROUGH THE DOOR TO HAVE A LOOK.

It is surprising how many aged care homes ask families to complete a full application, including a direct debit form, before they have even stepped inside the foyer, let alone seen a room.

Often, they will only give you a tour of the place if a room is available. Others will have marketing or customer relations staff who march potential residents or their families up and down corridors in near silence, focusing on the price of a room and offering almost no information about the size of the facility, the number of residents, care staff or nurses they employ, or the activities on offer.

Yet this important information can be a deal breaker for whether a person chooses a particular aged care home, particularly when potentially they are asked to part with more than half a million dollars

If the move is to be directly from the hospital, families may be asked to apply to six preferred facilities, involving multiple applications and tours for families and individuals, making the prospect of moving even more daunting.



**Bina Brown, Director,
Third Age Matters**

So how do you choose? Proximity to family and friends is often a starting point for where to look.

Availability of a room and the cost can be important, but if there are any positives in the aged care system, it is that rooms regularly become available and there are a multitude of ways to meet the accommodation and care costs.

Statistically, residential care vacancies are on the rise, so there may be several accommodation options – from grand hotel-like establishments with extra hotel type services, to older, more established facilities with a more homely feel. The outside appearance of what could potentially be your new home will certainly matter to some; but it is what is going on inside that really counts.

FOLLOWING THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO AGED CARE AND SAFETY THERE IS FAR GREATER TRANSPARENCY AROUND COMPLIANCE OR PERFORMANCE REPORTS THROUGH THE AGED QUALITY AND SAFETY COMMISSION WEBSITE.

The introduction last year of a star ratings system for aged care gives potential residents and their families further insight into the quality and staffing levels of a facility and a further starting point for what they might consider.

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A visit to the facility also gives you a chance to see what residents are up to (Source: Shutterstock)

Published on the My Aged Care website, the star ratings are based on four key subcategories: residents experience, staffing levels, compliance and quality measures.

A ONE STAR RATING INDICATES SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT NEEDED, TWO STARS INDICATES IMPROVEMENT NEEDED, THREE STARS INDICATES AN ACCEPTABLE QUALITY OF CARE, FOUR STARS INDICATES A GOOD QUALITY OF CARE AND A FIVE STAR RATING INDICATES AN EXCELLENT QUALITY OF CARE.

However, nothing beats visiting a place; having the opportunity to take in the look, feel and smell. I can accompany individuals and families on visits to three places and they know the minute they walk in the door whether it will be suitable.

Organising a tour is a chance to see the rooms and try to picture some of your furniture and personal possessions will look. It also shows you the layout and geography of the place - whether there are any pleasant breakout areas where you or your visitors could sit; whether there is plenty of light; the dining room set up, and whether there is easy access to the outdoors.

A visit to the facility also gives you a chance to see what residents are up to, and whether they look relaxed or well cared for, are well dressed and wearing clean clothes. It also lets you see whether residents are engaged in activities with each other and whether staff are interacting with them.

The quality of care must be a top priority, so the questions to ask might include how many carers and registered nurses are in the building at any time over a 24 hour period. It's now mandatory to have at least one registered nurse on duty 24/7.

Care staff numbers are also vital. Without mandatory staff-to-resident ratios it is hard to

get a good grip on this, but it would be a worry not to see any staff during a tour.

What is becoming common is for facilities to talk in terms of daily care minutes spent with a resident. Mandatory minimums start this October.

FOOD MATTERS A LOT, AND SOME PEOPLE WILL CARE WHERE AND HOW IT IS PREPARED – WHETHER THIS IS ON SITE BY A RESIDENT CHEF OR COOKED ELSEWHERE AND DELIVERED, WHAT THE OPTIONS ARE AND WHETHER THE FACILITY CATERS FOR SPECIFIC DIETS.

While meal times might be a good time to socialise, not everyone wants to eat every meal with the same people and may prefer to eat in their room. Sometimes, places with smaller dining areas appeal more than the larger ones.

Access to outdoor areas, either directly from a room or a common area, may be an important factor. Other people will prefer not to be on ground level, so might look for a balcony to access or furnish.

You may be left with a very long list of questions to ask the facility – and hopefully you'll get truthful answers that will help guide your decisions. It is not uncommon to only get to speak to the marketing or client liaison staff rather than the manager or care team leader, so some answers may need a follow up with the right people.

Additional questions around care may include what level of input a family has in the care plan of an individual, as well as which allied health professionals – such as dietitians, physiotherapists and occupational therapists are available and how often. Another important question might be for the facility to outline the communication process with family when someone is unwell?

Visiting podiatrists are common and most places have a hairdresser on site several days a week. Most facilities prefer to get medication delivered from their chemist of choice. Questions around the protocols for infection control are particularly relevant, including what is their plan if Covid-19 or RSV or gastroenteritis does strike their facility?

Aged care is one of those areas most people know little about until they have to. Once you know you need it and enter the aged care system, the questions can be endless – as they should be.

Bina Brown is the director of Canberra based aged care solutions company Third Age Matters.

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DESIGN & EQUIPMENT

Sustainable and therapeutic: The perfect 2 in 1 for your aged care home

by Sneha Krishnan, Deputy Editor, HelloCare

Creating a healthy lifestyle for your residents is of utmost priority for staff at aged care homes. From indoor board games to musical sessions and book clubs, most facilities cater to everyone's interests.

Often residents feel the lack of that spark and excitement when they move into an aged care home for the first time. And as normal as this may be, it's essential to break into this feeling and provide them with small opportunities that help them socialise everyday with other residents and staff.

These residents have spent a large part of their lives creating beautiful homes and meaningful communities but often as they age, they find it hard to keep up with the demands of maintaining their possessions, be it their homes, gardens, families or friends circles.

Attempting to do just that is Vegepod – An Australian owned idea that has now grown into a worldwide design, accepted by residential facilities across the globe.

THESE RAISED GARDEN BEDS ARE COMPACT AND EASY TO USE AND MADE TO FIT INTO ANY RESIDENTIAL FACILITY TO GROW YOUR FRUIT, VEG AND HERBS ALLOWING YOU TO CONTINUE LIVING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE WHILE BUILDING A LIKE-MINDED COMMUNITY AROUND YOU.

A Vegepod comes in three sizes to fit into the space in your facility. These garden beds are contained and fitted in with a self watering irrigation system with the presence of a wicking at the bottom which enables the plants to draw up water when needed. The reservoir holds a huge amount of water, which makes it a sustainable option all year round.



Vegepod is a raised garden bed that is compact and easy to use and is made to fit into any residential facility to grow your fruit, veg and herbs

(Source: Supplied)

“MOST OF THE AGED CARE FACILITIES THAT HAVE VEGEPOD IN THEIR GARDENS ONLY GO OUT TO WATER IT EVERY ONCE IN THREE WEEKS,” SAYS MELANIE ATHAN, HORTICULTURIST AND COMMUNITY COORDINATOR AT VEGEPOD AUSTRALIA.

The garden bed comes with a mesh canopy protecting the plants from pests, birds and harsh weather conditions. Once the base is filled with soil, the portable structure becomes quite heavy, making it a stable and safe option for your garden spaces.

Engaging in outdoor activities together as a community gives everyone something to look forward to. For those who are disabled or have limited mobility, regular community gatherings are essential to keep their mind and body active. Apart from the regular activities such as movie nights, pet therapy and intergenerational interactions that most facilities put together, outdoor activities involving gardening are therapeutic and have several physical and mental benefits.



Create a sensory garden for your residents living with dementia. Include some herbs for smell, this could help them connect with the foods they used to cook with. (Source: Supplied)

“Those who have bad backs find it hard to work in the garden,” says Melanie, “having a raised and portable garden bed like the Vegepod in the backyard just allows for that extra accessibility and to be wheeled around wherever you want it,” she adds.

At a time when food is becoming more expensive and less accessible, community gardening should be an integral part of our lives.

“So no matter what your ability, we basically enable gardening, which we believe is a human right to be able to grow your own food.”

“WITH AGED CARE SPECIFICALLY, WE’VE FOUND THAT A LOT OF THE PEOPLE IN THOSE CARE SETTINGS HAVE COME FROM HAVING QUITE BIG GARDENS AND FROM LOVING GARDENING, INTO A SPACE WHERE THEY HAVE VERY LITTLE ROOM TO GARDEN AT ALL, IF ANY,” SAYS MELANIE.

How exciting does that sound? Having a few residents sitting besides each other, in an open space bonding over the veggies and herbs they put in all the hard work for. It gives them something to take ownership of - a small plot of land that they have devoted their time on.

Most newer aged care facilities tend to lack outdoor spaces compared to the traditional ones. This certainly can be a hindering factor when it comes to gardening and other outdoor activities. “The Vegepod comes in three sizes and can be placed even in small balconies or common areas and shared spaces,” says Melanie.

Vegepod Australia has collaborated with the Therapeutic Horticulture Association of Australia. They focus on providing residents living with dementia a sensory gardening experience. “Enabling residents to smell, touch and feel the plants, and be around different bright colours is therapeutic and the Vegepod has become a really great tool,” she adds.

Add some ornamental plants that brighten up the space with its flowers and textures. It’s a great way to engage the residents in some quality outdoor time.

OVERALL, STUDIES HAVE SHOWN US THAT BEING SURROUNDED BY GREENERY CAN CALM YOUR MIND AND BODY, MAKING YOU FEEL RELAXED AND HAPPIER.

Melanie remembers a beautiful incident where she witnessed a resident sitting in her chair who was living with severe dementia but insisted on wanting to be a part of the gardening community at the facility. “They had the Vegepod rolled right up to her and she was digging, and she was planting and she was going through all the different plants, and smelling them. It was a whole sensory experience that was available to someone with limited ability.”



At a time when food is becoming more expensive and less accessible, community gardening should be an integral part of our lives. (Source: Shutterstock)

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LEGAL & COMPLIANCE

Rebranding 101: Give your company a facelift while maintaining brand identity

Changing how an iconic brand looks can be fraught with danger, and a name change can be even riskier. Consumer sentiment has a huge influence and any alterations to a much-loved brand could see loyalties tested.

by Alex Jacobs, *Journalist, hello leaders*

The aged care sector has seen several success stories over the years, with Bolton Clarke (formerly RSL Life Care and RDNS) and Silverchain (Silver Chain Group) the most impactful rebrands. But it's not all smooth sailing. While some of these changes were subtle, they had their own fair share of pitfalls. *Hello leaders* spoke to Rubina Carlson, Digital Marketing Manager at Refuel Creative, to understand the importance of the dos and don'ts of rebranding.

DO: Understand current brand perception

The aged care industry has a diverse target audience, from the consumers themselves to family members, formal and informal carers, and even staff members. Their perceptions must be

considered when reflecting on brand recognition, according to Ms Carlson.

"With an established brand, it's about understanding what it means to existing consumers and whether that aligns with the future direction of the business or the brand. Because if you don't understand it, then you don't know how to shift the perception," Ms Carlson said.

"THEN, MORE BROADLY, HOW WELL DO PEOPLE KNOW THAT BRAND? FOR LARGE PLAYERS IN THE AGED CARE MARKET, BRAND RECOGNITION IS VERY STRONG. SO DOING A REBRAND INVOLVING A NAME CHANGE WOULD BE A FAR BIGGER PROJECT."

Well-known providers and organisations might find it's not worth a full rebranding because of existing brand recognition and loyalty. A logo refresh could suffice. But a strategic approach to investigating how the existing brand supports long-term aspirations is the best step here.

DO: Conduct plenty of research

A major overhaul of an existing brand is no easy feat. The process itself will take at least 3-6 months, if not more for larger companies, so it's essential to conduct thorough market research. Start with face-to-face interviews, group workshops and consumer surveys to collect qualitative and quantitative data. This is the information that will reinforce the entire process and influence the overall strategy.



Does your current branding reflect your values and goals, or is a new look required for future growth?
(Source: Shutterstock)



Rubina Carlson, Digital Marketing Manager at Refuel Creative

DON'T: Forget the widespread impact

Rebranding is about more than just a logo and company values. Far reaching implications include signage, social media accounts, legal documents, websites, email signatures ... the list goes on. It's a big task to undertake and all facets need to be explored and planned out during the planning, research and conception phases.

"A REBRAND IS ULTIMATELY A CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROJECT INTERNALLY, PARTICULARLY IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE CHANGING THINGS LIKE HOW WE REFER TO OURSELVES (IN DOCUMENTS OR MARKETING). SO INSTEAD OF SAYING PATIENT, FOR EXAMPLE, THE COMPANY NOW REFERS TO PEOPLE AS GUESTS OR CARE RECIPIENTS," MR CARLSON EXPLAINED.

"The main thing is really to get the concept down, and once the concept is in place, then it's very easy to move into the rollout phase [but] do have a list of everything that has the brand on it."

DO: Focus on your strengths

Ms Carlson said most marketing challenges occur when companies step away from their strengths - that is brand recognition - and they try to modernise a heritage/legacy brand too much. Her advice for those taking on necessary rebranding? Stand by what matters the most.

"Sometimes when you have so many people providing their input, it is difficult. You might end up with something that looks quite vanilla and it doesn't really stand out. So stay true to the things

that make you stand out from the competitors, your unique selling propositions. What are the core points of difference that you can say you do better or no one else does?" she said.

DON'T: Hard launch the new look

Give consumers and staff time to learn about the changes before thrusting them into a new era through a soft launch. For example, consider teasing elements of a new logo, such as colours or fonts, or simply announce a set date for the change ahead of time. However it's done, having an established marketing strategy will pay off.

"Go back to [your stakeholders] and keep them in the loop on progress. For everyone else, let them know the new look and new brand is coming at the final stages, so 'Please keep an eye out for new flyers that will be dropped, a new look on socials, and a new email signature. Letting people know in advance is helpful," Ms Carlson said.

This will also help prepare staff and consumers for potential backlash. Brands with well-known identities often cop criticism from the public for unannounced changes.

"Depending on how strong your brand is, some people feel ownership over it. And if you're taking a well-loved brand, any changes are going to result in some negativity. It's something you'll have to accept and prepare yourself for."

Ultimately, the best thing you can do is plan when rebranding. Don't rush into it, and do take your time identifying strengths and weaknesses. There's no point in rebranding for the sake of change.



Rebranding is a huge undertaking. Research and planning cannot be rushed as a diverse range of opinions and ideas are necessary for success.

(Source: Shutterstock)



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How young leaders can overcome imposter syndrome

by Alex Jacobs, *Journalist, hello leaders*

If you ever feel out of place, like you don't belong, you could be dealing with a phenomenon called imposter syndrome. It's something young leaders, experienced professionals, sportspeople and celebrities alike have battled, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with feeling overwhelmed by it.

And when you do feel burdened by self-doubt, the best thing you can do is look imposter syndrome in the eye, call it by its name and take the best steps to overcome it.

What is imposter syndrome?

First coined as the impostor phenomenon in 1978 by authors Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, imposter syndrome is an internal experience of intellectual phoniness. People experiencing it feel anxious despite achieving success, as though their ability to perform at a high standard is a facade. Therefore, rather than being able to enjoy their success and recognition, they feel like a fraud who's going to be exposed at any moment.

Imposter syndrome doesn't equate to humility; it's not simply brushing off positive feedback or not enjoying praise. Young leaders with imposter syndrome can be incredibly critical of themselves, leading to:

- ✱ Self-doubt and fear of poor performance
- ✱ Unrealistic personal expectations
- ✱ Constant self-sabotaging
- ✱ Regular disregard of personal achievements
- ✱ High stress levels and burnout

How is it caused?

There's no single cause of imposter syndrome; often a range of social factors lead to ongoing



Confronting imposter syndrome and acknowledging its presence is the first step towards overcoming yourself-doubt. (Source: Shutterstock)

self-doubt and criticism. For that reason alone it can be quite difficult to overcome, especially without some help. Some of the more common causes include:

- ✱ Increased pressure and higher expectations to perform well academically, physically and socially as a child
- ✱ Criticism for poor performance despite being praised as a "gifted or talented" child
- ✱ Performance-based rewards and recognition in the workplace
- ✱ Mental health disorders, including anxiety and depression
- ✱ Socio-economic background
- ✱ A sense of belonging with social groups or the workplace

It's important to acknowledge these causes are not mutually exclusive, nor are they the only factors influencing imposter syndrome. Yes, there are strong links between expectations of others and the way individuals view their own accomplishments, but it can also be purely based on self-assessment. Although normal, it's the moments of ongoing self-doubt and self-sabotage that really need to be confronted by young leaders wanting to unleash their full potential.

How you can turn imposter syndrome into success

You should never find yourself staring in the mirror acting as your biggest critic. There's a time and place for feedback and it should always be in a constructive and supportive manner.

There are some positive steps any young leader can take to address imposter syndrome. And even though the journey will be different for everyone, you will find something that works for you.

Acknowledge imposter syndrome by giving it a name, and talking about it. Too many young leaders and young professionals try to avoid it or think no one else has ever experienced it. But most people do have moments of self-doubt, and many have battled – or still battle – imposter syndrome. So by naming it and talking to others about your feelings, concerns and struggles, you can step towards a greater sense of belonging.

Confront your negative thoughts. When your inner voice talks you down after receiving praise, why? What evidence is there to suggest you don't deserve recognition? If you can challenge yourself and create a list of your strengths and competencies, you can bring down imposter syndrome.

Learn from your mistakes. Okay, so perhaps you didn't achieve the success you wanted to. We all make mistakes and we all learn from them.



You should never find yourself staring in the mirror acting as your biggest critic. Always provide feedback to yourself in a constructive and supportive manner. (Source: Shutterstock)

So instead of blaming yourself and placing a critical approach on what happened, use the experience as a learning opportunity. Identify where you can get better, gain new skills, and show that you can overcome anything.

Praise yourself and celebrate achievements, big or small. It's easy to get lost in the routine, so when you make it to the end of a big week, reward yourself. When you receive recognition at work, splurge on a coffee. Do whatever it takes to have a good moment of self-love. You should be your own biggest cheerleader!

Seek feedback and guidance from a trusted colleague or mentor. One of the biggest obstacles with imposter syndrome is seeking feedback from others. The need to self-criticise often means shutting down and ignoring positive or constructive feedback. A beneficial relationship with someone who can be honest and supportive provides you with an external voice to challenge your self-doubt. Vocalising your worries and fears could well be the key to beating your imposter syndrome, too.



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Upcoming events

OCTOBER

Victorian Healthcare Week

Melbourne 18 – 19 October, 2023

Melbourne Convention & Expo Centre

Victorian Healthcare Week aims to bring together the most innovative and forward-thinking healthcare professionals in Victoria and beyond. As part of the Victorian Government's healthcare transformation agenda, Victorian Healthcare Week is a must-attend event for healthcare professionals looking to drive change and shape the future of healthcare. From cutting-edge technologies to revolutionary new solutions, the exhibition promises to showcase the latest advancements that are transforming the healthcare industry.

ACCPA National Conference

Adelaide 25 – 27 October, 2023

Adelaide Convention Centre

The 2023 ACCPA State Conferences, 'Driving Quality Care', are designed to equip leaders with the skills and insight they need to navigate new regulations and new expectations, to embrace the new normal and not just survive but thrive.

DAL EXPO 2023

Adelaide 13 – 14 October, 2023

Jubilee Pavilion, Adelaide Showgrounds

The MyLifeChoices Disability, Ageing & Lifestyle Expo (DAL Expo) is back in 2023 bringing together South Australians with a wide range of products and services to help people live their best life. The DAL Expo showcases over 200 providers of products, services and information relating to the disability and ageing sector. Talk to the Exhibitors about providing solutions to improve your lifestyle and try out new personal aids and equipment.

The Source Kids Disability Expo

Perth 28 – 29 October, 2023

Perth Convention & Exhibition Centre

With over 150 disability product and service providers under one roof for two days, you'll find information and be able to speak to providers supporting families of children with a range of

disabilities including Autism (ASD) and sensory issues such as sensory processing disorder, Down syndrome, Cerebral palsy, vision and hearing impairments, and neurodevelopmental disorders such as dyspraxia. A lineup of performers are set to entertain young and old. Expect a sensory zone to relax in a sensory friendly space alongside sporty and chill out zones to make it a fun day out.

NOVEMBER

ATSA Independent Living Expo Canberra

Canberra 8 – 9 November, 2023

Exhibition Park in Canberra

For nearly 25 years the ATSA Independent Living Expo has been Australia's foremost exhibition for assistive technology, rehabilitation and aged care equipment as exhibitors display products and services in mobility solutions, pressure care, employment support, accessible recreation, holiday ideas, modified motor vehicles and more. As one of Australia's most comprehensive events for people with disability, seniors, carers and allied health professionals, all ATSA Expos are developed by the industry for the industry.

Care Expo

Sydney 10 – 11 November, 2023

International Convention Centre, Darling Harbour

This diverse industry and consumer exhibition showcases products, services and facilities for the support and care sectors. Come face-to-face with the care community to grow your brand awareness. Build your customer database, let people know what you do and how to reach you, turning exhibitor patrons into returning clients.

Ausmed Elevate '23

Melbourne 30 November – 1 December, 2023

Pullman Melbourne On The Park

Ausmed Elevate '23 will empower you and your team with the knowledge and practical skills needed to elevate your L&D program. Workforce education managers and L&D coordinators of Australia's healthcare system, for the first time, this one's for you!

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SYDNEY SHOWGROUND

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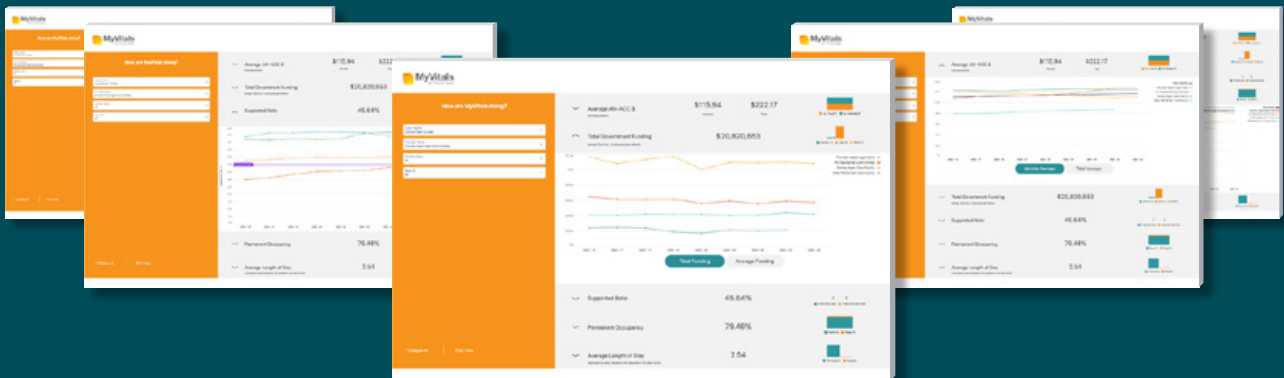
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