



POLICY TAKEAWAYS



THE UNIVERSITY
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CREATE CHANGE

Centre for Policy Futures

Building a resilient and sustainable care workforce for the future

Addressing Attraction and Retention in the Community Care Sector

The community services sector plays an essential role in supporting individual and community well-being. It also has a key economic role, generating employment and partnering with government to address complex needs. However, the sector faces growing challenges in attracting and retaining front-line workers, pressures that will intensify as demand on the care economy increases.



Funded by Anglicare Southern Queensland, our study examined barriers and enablers of a sustainable care workforce. The research highlights three synergistic levels of recommendations for a more diverse and sustainable workforce: 1) **systemic advocacy** to create an enabling environment for the care economy, 2) **organisational structures** that support attraction and employment, and 3) **cultural initiatives** that strengthen retention through meaningful support, supervision and leadership.

Key Takeaways

1

Systemic: Sector-Wide Recommendations

A fundamental shift in how society perceives and supports care work is required. This involves creating public education initiatives that challenge the “dead-end job” perception, while highlighting genuine career pathways and diverse roles. Equally critical is sustained advocacy for increased financial support, including minimum staffing ratios, full-time contract flexibility, and improved pay and conditions. These systemic changes must be accompanied by proactive outreach programs in educational settings. Providers would also benefit from implementing mechanisms to maintain strong community connections while leveraging their scale to improve working conditions.

2

Organisational: HR Structures & Systems Recommendations

Organisations must reimagine recruitment and employment practices to better attract and retain workers. This includes targeted campaigns that emphasise the intrinsic rewards of care work, tailoring messages for different groups - such as highlighting relationship-building for young men and meaningful work for all genders. Employment should prioritise permanent full-time roles where possible, while offering flexible arrangements and improved casual models. Formal career pathways and professional development are essential, as is targeting recruitment from sectors with higher transition potential (e.g., manufacturing, retail) and addressing qualification barriers through combined employment-training models.

3

Organisational: Cultural & Relational Recommendations

The foundation of successful workforce retention lies in building supportive organisational cultures that acknowledge the emotional and physical demands of care work. This requires comprehensive support systems including supervision, mentorship, debriefing, and professional counselling. However, organisations must carefully balance promoting these supports - advertising them too prominently during recruitment may inadvertently signal high job stress and deter potential applicants. Community sector leadership must demonstrate integrity by actively living organisational values and protecting staff from discrimination or challenging interactions.

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