# AGED CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY TASKFORCE

## SUBMISSIONS INVITED

### Overview

The Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce (the Taskforce) welcomes your input to on the development of the Aged Care Workforce Strategy (the Strategy).

The Taskforce was formed on 1 November 2017, and is due to report to the Minister for Aged Care, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP by 30 June 2018. It is headed by an independent chair, Professor John Pollaers.

The Taskforce is developing a strategy for growing and sustaining the workforce providing aged care services and support for older people, to meet their care needs in a variety of settings across Australia. The Taskforce will place particular emphasis on:

- Workforce planning covering workforce size and structure, managing growth and changes in service requirements, mix of occupations, workforce roles and distinct workforce needs in different care settings and market catchments.

- Supply and retention of the right workers with the right aptitudes in the right locations, and securing and sustaining up-to-date skills.

- The capacity of providers as employers, and the role of sector leadership, to equip the workforce to meet service requirements, needs and expectations of quality of care and services.

- Building sector-wide capabilities to innovate and extend new ways of working tailored to the needs of the older people who use aged care services, their families, carers and communities.

In undertaking its work, the Taskforce will be expected to:

- Assess trends, emerging issues and potential scenarios relevant to the current and future workforce.

- Cover the entire aged care workforce engaged in providing care and services, including support staff, contracted services and volunteers.

- Work in the context of aged care system policy settings, integrity, consumer safeguards and funding.

- Consider wider government policy settings of relevance to the workforce.

- Have regard to recent submissions to and reports of relevant inquiries on aged care workforce matters, and government responses.

- Engage and consult widely to ensure all points of view are heard and considered.

- Integrate in its work an inclusive and responsive workforce to support the diverse needs of older people.

- Ensure coverage of regional, rural, remote and very remote workforce issues.

- Consider cross-sectoral challenges and opportunities, particularly with the health, disability, education and employment sectors.

- Incorporate short term, medium term and longer term actions as part of a sustainable strategy.

The Taskforce is building its approach to the strategy around five strategic imperatives:

1. Why the aged care industry matters

2. Industry leadership, mindset and accountability

3. Industry workforce organisation and education (current and future)

4. Industry attraction and retention

5. Translating research and technology into models of care and practice

**Consultation and Engagement**

As noted above, the Taskforce has been asked to engage and consult widely on shaping and building the strategy. To date, this has included:

- a working summit on 4 December 2017 that brought together a broad range of knowledge, skills and perspectives to support the Taskforce in shaping the Strategy;

- workshops with consumers, carers and aged care employees in four locations nationally with five more to be conducted over February 2018; and

- bilateral discussions with aged care advocates, peak body representatives, employment agencies and others with an interest in the aged care workforce.

These are being supported by targeted community consultations and issues focused roundtables.

This opportunity to provide submissions to the Taskforce is a key element of the Taskforce's Consultation and Engagement process to ensure all points of view are heard and considered.  Further details about the Taskforce's work are available from the Taskforce website.

**Building on evidence and knowledge**

In shaping the Strategy, the Taskforce will take into consideration what has already been covered in recent reviews, inquiries reports and studies touching on workforce issues.

Additional pieces of work to inform the Taskforce have been commissioned to aid the Taskforce to: assess trends, emerging issues and potential scenarios relevant to the current and future workforce; understand what drives the current workforce profile and perceptions of the industry (from community care through to residential care); understand current organisational, job and career profiles and identify opportunities to build on these and meet the needs the needs of the future; and the role of education and training in supporting the current and future workforces.

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**Making a contribution**

To support its work the Taskforce is undertaking two phases of broad consultation. In this first phase the Taskforce is seeking your ideas and suggestions on key considerations for each strategic imperative to inform development of the strategy.

The second phase will coincide with the next workforce summit in April 2018 and seek feedback on the draft strategy.

Please share your views on each of the imperatives as indicated below, using a maximum of 250 words for each text box.

If you have previously raised workforce matters for consideration in reviews/inquiries or published materials, and you wish to refer the Taskforce to these, please note them in your submission under Question 11.

Should you wish to provide broader input than that raised in the questions you may wish to provide an attachment in Word or PDF.

If you have any questions about the submission process, please contact the Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce secretariat at: ACSTaskforce@health.gov.au

**Submissions close on 16 March 2018.**

**PART A: DEMOGRAPHICS**

1   Do you give consent for your submission to be published in whole or in part?

*Please select one item (required):*

    Yes

2   Are you answering on behalf of an organisation?

*Please select one item:*

    Yes

    If yes, please provide your organisation's name

    Volunteering Australia

2a. If you answered yes to the above question, do you have authority from your organisation to answer?

*Please select one item:*

    Yes

3   Where do you live or where is your organisation based?

*Please select one item:*

    ACT

3a. (Optional) Indicate your City/Town: Canberra City

**Details about your organisation**

4   What role best describes your organisation?

*Please select all that apply:*

    Aged care advocacy

    Community services organisation

    Government agency

    Peak body – consumer

    Peak body – provider

    Peak body – professional

5   Does your organisation provide support or services to any people with diverse characteristics or life experiences?

*Please select all that apply:*

    Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

    People from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities

    People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

    People who live in rural or remote areas

    People who are financially or socially disadvantaged

People who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless

People with mental health problems and mental illnesses

People with a disability

Veterans

6.  In which states/territories does your organisation deliver services?

    *Please select all that apply:*

    All States/Territories

6a. What is the name of the towns/towns that your organisation delivers services to? Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering in Australia.

**More details about you**

7   What role best describes you?

*Please select one item:*

Other – please specify
Policy, Advocacy and Research

8.   Do you identify with any of the following groups with diverse characteristics and life experiences?

*Please select all that apply:*

N/A

**For aged care providers only**

9.  What types of care does your service deliver?

    *N/A*

**PART B: SHAPING THE AGED CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY**

**(Non-Mandatory questions)**

*You can choose to answer all or some questions.*

*Please keep responses to 250 words for each text box.*

*If you attended the Taskforce's working summit held on 4 December 2017, you may have already answered questions 1-3. You can either provide a further response or move to question 4.*

## 1    Why does an aged care workforce strategy matter?

An aged care workforce strategy is vital toward a holistic approach to aged care that considers the role and needs of the diverse workforce engaged in the sector.

Volunteering Australia stresses that volunteers are essential to the aged care workforce, delivering frontline services and ancillary support in aged care and residential settings. Volunteer engagement should be a key policy objective for an aged care workforce strategy.

A 2017 Senate inquiry report into the *Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce* also highlighted this with, "83 per cent of residential facilities and 51 per cent of home care and home support outlets utilising volunteer staff."[i] The inquiry also heard that "there are five volunteers for every paid worker in the not-for-profit sector, at a value of about $290 billion per annum. In 2016, 23,537 volunteers provided 114,987 hours of care to older Australians in residential facilities."[ii][iii][iv]

Volunteering Australia emphasises that there will be a significant impact on sector support if an aged care workforce strategy does not consider the role of volunteers, Volunteering Support Services and Volunteer Involving Organisations – this includes ensuring priority funding.

## 2    What practical difference do you hope a strategy will make?

An aged care workforce strategy will provide a nationally consistent framework for workforce development, education, training and the delivery of aged care support. It will also allow for equal recognition of the supports and services provided by both paid and unpaid (volunteer) staff.

Volunteering Australia also highlights that appropriate funding is required to necessitate the supports and services provided by volunteers in the aged care sector. Volunteering Australia defines volunteering as "time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain"[v], however volunteer involvement includes a cost to service providers. The growing reliance on volunteers in the aged care sector means it is essential that the strategy recognises the growing operational cost of delivering quality and agile volunteering programs that are responsive to the requirements of the aged care sector.

### 3 How do you think a strategy can contribute to meeting future needs in aged care?

Volunteering Support Services and Volunteer Involving Organisations need to be funded as a priority funding area given the crucial role they play in the management and support of volunteers in aged care.

A 2011 Productivity Commission inquiry into Caring for Older Australians highlighted that the informal care provided by volunteers should be factored into funding. Recommendations made in the report highlighted that "Funding for services which engage volunteers in service delivery consider the costs associated with:
- Volunteer administration and regulation
- Appropriate training and support for volunteers."[vi]

### 4 Tell us what you see as the changes on the horizon that aged care needs to be ready for, and how you think the workforce strategy can contribute to meeting these future needs (in the context of an ageing population calling on aged care services in a variety of settings)?

With the rates of formal volunteering on the decline, and a misalignment between the level of community interest in volunteering, especially in sectors with the highest unmet demand,[vii] it is even more important to ensure adequate and ongoing Government investment and support in volunteering, to ensure ongoing and uninterrupted service provision.

Volunteering Australia recommends that volunteers are supported in their role, with adequate access to resources, services, and education, such as assistive technologies, to ensure the best possible service provision into the future.

### 5 Tell us what is working well in the aged care workforce (across the industry, at provider or service level or through place-based initiatives) and where future opportunities lie.

Volunteering Support Services are placed-based services that provide the critical infrastructure required for safe, effective and sustainable volunteering. They are responsible for the promotion, resourcing and support of volunteering in local communities, and assist thousands of organisations across the country to recruit, retain and manage their volunteers. Volunteering Australia recommends that Volunteering Support Services should be adequately resourced and recognised for the support they provide in aged care services and programs.

Volunteering Support Services, such as Volunteering SA&NT and Volunteering Tasmania, are funded through the CHSP program, delivering vital services that support programs in the aged care sector. These organisations support Volunteer Involving Organisations to recruit suitable volunteers and manage them according to best practice in volunteer management. There would be enormous benefit in extending this service nationally.

Volunteering Australia highlights the valuable role and contributions volunteers provide in aged care service delivery by enhancing the wellbeing of consumers, as well as achieving a sense of satisfaction themselves. There are opportunities to increase volunteer involvement, especially among younger cohorts, to support older Australians. However, it is vital that this is matched by adequate funding.

### 6 What do you think are the key factors the Taskforce needs to consider to attract and retain staff?

*You may wish to consider some or all of the following in your response:*

- *Rural, regional and remote*

- *A diverse workforce and diverse consumers*

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- *Workforce planning, roles and occupations*
- *Education and training*
- *Right workers with right aptitudes in the right locations*

Volunteering Australia is cognisant of the specialised role that volunteers can play in supporting the diverse needs of older people. For people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, forming relationships with people from a similar cultural background can be of profound benefit. Consumers should be able to connect with people of their own age, gender, and from a shared culture. Volunteers can play a key role in building social capital, and provide a vital link in cultivating social connections. Employing strategies to assist with this, and by ensuring that volunteers are a priority in the strategy would maximise the flexibility of care and support the needs of diverse consumers.

Training in aged care is specialised and can be resource-intensive. However, many smaller residential aged care facilities may not have had the opportunity to offer training for their volunteers either due to funding restraints or lack of access.[viii] Training is essential to the delivery of a human-rights based approach to service, and must be carried out by Volunteering Support Services and Volunteer Involving Organisations.

The strategy will also need to offer meaningful volunteering experiences to attract and retain volunteers into the future. Volunteering is widely considered to be an essential pathway to employment. Meaningful, well-resourced and supported volunteer roles provide people considering a career in aged care with an opportunity to try it out before they commit. In all likelihood, this would lead to an increase in people choosing a career in aged care.

## 7    What areas of knowledge, skills and capability need to be strengthened within the aged care workforce?

*You may wish to consider some or all of the following in your response:*

- *Clinical care*
- *Needs assessment*
- *Workforce planning*
- *Business management and leadership*
- *Risk management*
- *Care planning*
- *Dementia*
- *End of life care*
- *Social care*

The strategy should recognise and consider the knowledge, skills and capability of volunteers. Volunteers play a critical role in fostering wellness and independence for people in aged care settings. The social capital derived from volunteer engagement in aged care is of profound benefit to both participants and volunteers. Volunteers also play a unique role in assisting consumers by developing meaningful relationships, and reducing social isolation. Volunteers also have an integral role to play in service delivery, by building on operational strength, promoting provider goals, and achieving outcomes.

Volunteering Australia recommends the use of the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* as a best-practice guide for volunteer participation in aged care. The National Standards have been developed in consultation with the volunteering sector to support the involvement of volunteers, and are a resource for organisations that engage volunteers. The advice provided by the *National Standards*

*for Volunteer Involvement* provide tailored information for organisations on how to recruit, induct, manage and retain volunteers. They are a best-practice framework for organisations to consider the role of volunteers and the impact effective volunteer involvement can have on achieving strategic goals.

Volunteering Australia recommends that there is additional funding and support for Volunteer Involving Organisations in the aged care sector to engage volunteers and implement the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*. This will also ensure that organisations can fund access to training, education, supports and service for their volunteer workforce. This will also reduce barriers for individuals to engage in volunteering, and encourage people to begin volunteering in aged care settings.

## 8     What do you think is needed to improve and better equip the workforce to meet individual needs and expectations?

The use of assistive technologies can increase the independence of many older people in aged care settings, and reduce the physical and emotional burden on volunteers. Volunteering Australia stresses that volunteers should be sufficiently supported, with adequate access to assistive technologies. Greater access to assistive technologies can also reduce volunteer burnout, or defer the use of more intensive aged care services.[ix]  In our view, respite and other services should also be more easily accessible and responsive to the needs of informal carers and volunteers.[x]

Specialist education and training for volunteers engaged in residential settings is an integral component of successful service delivery. This is particularly significant for those engaged with diverse population groups. Volunteering Australia recommends consideration for the costs associated with volunteer administration and regulation, including appropriate training and support for volunteers.

## 9     What is needed for leadership, mindset and accountability to innovate and extend new way of working tailored to the needs of older people who use aged care services, their families, carers and communities?

Volunteering Australia recommends that building specialised Volunteering Support Services and Volunteer Involving Organisations into representative structures is essential to ensuring leadership and accountability for volunteer involvement, and to certify tailored needs for older people. These organisations should be involved in the design, monitoring and evolution of the aged care strategy so that the views of the volunteer workforce needs are appropriately represented. Volunteering Australia also reiterates that by building people and representative organisations into structures and frameworks will guarantee that people with diverse needs can both access services, make informed choices, and exercise control over their care.

10    **What should aged care providers consider with workforce planning?**

*You may wish to consider all or some of the following in your response*

- *Workforce size and structure*
- *Managing growth and change in service requirements*
- *Mix of occupations*
- *Workforce roles*
- *Distinct workforce needs in different workforce settings*

Volunteering Australia emphasises aged care providers should consider the valuable role volunteers play in aged care settings. Research indicates that volunteers gain valuable skills, developing both personally and professionally from their involvement in volunteering activities. In fact, organisations who engage volunteers in the disability support sector have found there is a marked difference in the outcomes achieved by volunteers compared with paid staff.[xi] Service providers should consider the role of volunteers within their own workforce strategies, particularly given the enormous impact volunteers make in building social capital, and assisting with the delivery of long-term, innovative and agile service provision. This is vital to enhanced productivity, better operational outcomes for workers and consumers, and a more cohesive workforce.

Volunteering Australia also believes that the health, wellbeing and safety of staff (including volunteers), and older people are paramount. Aged care providers should include all volunteers in their policies and procedures, and recognise the duty of care they have toward volunteers. To this end, volunteers should be insured, and have access to the same education, training, resources and support provided to paid employees.

**Additional comments**

11.    **In undertaking its work, the Taskforce has been asked to have regard to recent submissions to and reports of relevant inquiries on aged care workforce matters, and government responses. If you want the Taskforce to draw on a submission you have made, or evidence or materials you want to draw to our attention, please provide the details in the text box below.**

Volunteering Australia have made a few submissions on aged care related matters. Please refer to evidence and recommendations provided in these submissions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the volunteer workforce in aged care settings.

- Inquiry into the Quality of Care in Residential Aged Care Facilities in Australia: https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1518059414VolunteeringAustraliaresponseontheInquiryintotheQualityofCareinResidentialAgedCareFacilitiesinAustralia.pdf
- Future Reform – An Integrated Care at Home Program to Support Older Australians: https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1504492585VolunteeringAustraliaSubmissiononAnIntegratedCareatHomeProgram.pdf
- Effectiveness of the Aged Care Quality Assessment and accreditation framework for protecting residents from abuse and poor practices, and ensuring proper clinical and medical care standards are maintained and practised: https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1503278511SubmissionontheEffectivenessoftheAgedCareQualityAssessmentandaccreditationframework.pdf

[i] The Senate (2017), Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce, Community Affairs References Committee, p13.

[ii] Volunteering SA&NT Inc (2017), *Committee Hansard,* p34.

[iii] Flinders University (2017), *Committee Hansard,* National Institute of Labour Studies, Table 4.21, p26.

[iv] The Senate (2017), Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce, Community Affairs References Committee, p36.

[v] Volunteering Australia (2015) 'Definition of Volunteering', http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/policy-andbest-practise/definition-of-volunteering/.

[vi] Productivity Commission (2011), Caring for Older Australians, Carers, Overview, http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/aged-care/report/aged-care-overview-booklet.pdf, pLXX.

[vii] Volunteering Australia and PwC (2016) 2016 State of Volunteering in Australia, https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Volunteering-in-Australia-full-report.pdf.

[viii] Volunteering Australia and Volunteering and Contact ACT (2016), Submission to NDIA ILC Framework Consultation, p9.

[ix] Productivity Commission (2011), Caring for Older Australians, Volume 2, http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/aged-care/report/aged-care-overview-booklet.pdf, p338.

[x] Productivity Commission (2011), Caring for Older Australians, Carers, Overview, http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/aged-care/report/aged-care-overview-booklet.pdf, pLXXXV.

[xi] Volunteering Australia (2017), Response on National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Quality and Safeguards Commission and Other Measures) Bill 2017, https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1501210867VAResponseontheNationalDisabilityInsuranceSchemeAmendmentQualityandSafeguardsCommissionandOtherMeasuresBill2017.pdf, p8.