



Centre for
Cultural Diversity
in Ageing

Supported by Benetas

Towards the Well-being of the Culturally Diverse Aged Care Workforce

A Holistic Approach

Discussion Paper

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Towards the Well-being of the Culturally Diverse Aged Care Workforce – A Holistic Approach

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Foreword

The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing is pleased to publish this discussion paper entitled “Towards the Well-being of the Culturally Diverse Aged Care – A Holistic Approach” for policy makers, government representatives, care economy stakeholders, aged care peak bodies and the wider aged care sector. The report is a result of an identified gap of policies and practices that focus holistically and comprehensively on the overall wellbeing of Australia’s culturally and linguistically (CALD) or migrant aged care workforce.

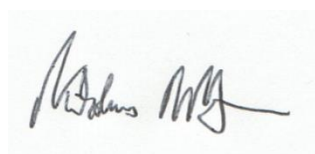
Australia’s workforce is increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse across the wider care economy and we know that a very significant proportion of the aged care workforce is highly diverse in terms of culture, language, ethnicity, faith and spirituality to name but a few.

Currently, little work has been done that looks at issues relating to the CALD and migrant aged care workforce from a more holistic perspective including stronger intersectional and inter-agency perspectives in government and policy considerations and planning.

The research has identified seven key themes that closely analyse the wellbeing of Australia’s CALD and migrant aged care workforce. In this report, The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing also provides forty-three recommendations with a view to enhancing the wellbeing of the CALD and migrant aged care workforce. We believe that this research will encourage further analysis and thinking in the development of solutions to help facilitate the wellbeing, safety, and career progression of the diverse aged care workforce.

We wish to thank Professor Susan Feldman for her outstanding contributions in drafting this important report in collaboration with The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing.

We look forward to working with the Australian Department of Health and Aged to implement the report’s recommendations.



Nikolaus Rittinghausen

Manager, The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing

Executive Summary

The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing (The Centre) is funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care under the Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC) program and supported by Benetas. The Centre provides expertise in culturally inclusive policy and practices for the aged services sector. With over 25 years of experience The Centre has supported aged care providers to address the needs of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The purpose of The Centre for Cultural Diversity is to build capacity and capabilities of Australian aged care providers to deliver services that are welcoming, inclusive, and accessible. The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing's service areas include inclusive practice training and workshops, capacity building to promote cultural inclusion and equity, and diversity advice and consulting.

A Holistic View of Well-being

Well-being is understood to be a positive state experienced by both individuals and societies alike. Well-being includes physical and mental health, quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute productively to their world with a sense of meaning on purpose. Adopting a holistic approach to well-being is a way of thinking and acting, one that considers the whole person, a system or organisation not just the individual parts.

This report places an emphasis on the well-being of both the current and future migrant aged care workforce and accordingly at the centre of strategic-thinking, policy and development, research, and best practice.

Project Aims

- To provide a comprehensive understanding about the well-being of migrant aged care workers in Australia.
- To provide a holistic perspective of the distinct yet interconnected themes and elements that contribute to the wellbeing of migrant aged care workers.
- To document the scope of both the challenges and opportunities facing migrant workers in the Australian aged care sector as identified in research literature, government, and community reports.

The Key Themes

Addressing the key question – the well-being of migrant aged care workers, provided the overarching framework for this project resulted in:

- The identification of seven individual core themes or elements as well as a range of inter-connected and significant sub-themes.

- An understanding that each theme or element whilst inextricably interconnected, may be considered either individually or one to the other.
- The identification of both the challenges and enablers central to promoting the well-being of migrant workers in aged care.
- Recognition that a holistic approach to well-being has the potential to provide an in-road towards enhancing a migrant aged care worker's sense of well-being.

The Seven Key Themes

- Conditions of Employment.
- Organisational Leadership.
- Training and Professional Development.
- The Workplace.
- Racial Stereotyping and Discrimination.
- Gender.
- Connecting, Belonging and Respect.

Summary of the Findings

To date there is a paucity of literature with a focus on the well-being of migrant worker in the aged care industry.

- Increasingly there is a need for migrant workers to fill the gaps in the aged care sector.
- Migrant workers adaptability to new cultures and environments is central to their success in their new place of employment.
- Worker resilience is essential for success in new and sometimes alien environments.
- The gendered nature of the workforce and associated family responsibilities combined with a lack of availability of family support.
- Migrant workers may lack adequate personal or economic resources.
- Limited time spent in Australia before joining the industry combined with an unfamiliarity of the culture may cause workers added stress.
- Lack of respect for or assumptions about previous professional qualifications and experience undermines a worker's confidence and diminishes work satisfaction.
- Clearly articulated organisational values can enhance the integration of migrant workers.
- Poor workplace orientation processes for migrant workers may foster negative and racist attitudes from professional staff and recipients of care alike.
- Stereotyping may be expressed through negative day-to-day interactions in an environment where workers are not respected or welcomed.
- Support from within an organisation is fundamental to settling migrants into a new work environment.
- Poor levels of English proficiency may have an adverse impact on the respect and inclusion of fellow workers.

- Language barriers may erode pride in professional accomplishments and compromise a worker's sense of wellbeing.
- Opportunities to improve English language skills are central to ensuring worker confidence.
- Lack of accessible, relevant, and accurate work-related information reduces the capacity of migrant workers to perform their professional duties.
- Workers may experience personal and job insecurity in relation to the status of their short-term visas.
- Financial insecurity as related to casual employment, particularly for workers on minimum hours.
- Opportunities for workplace promotion maybe limited by a worker's casual employment status.
- Racial stereotyping and racist attitudes can be expressed through unlawful discriminatory workplace practices or lack of professional opportunities for promotion.
- Few social and support networks for migrant workers exist in regional and rural areas.
- Rising living costs and unaffordability of housing especially for casual workers on minimum award wages.
- Social support networks and connections are central to fostering a sense of well-being and belonging in both the workplace and community.

In Conclusion

This report offers a nuanced picture, valuable insights, and a greater depth of understanding about the value of a integrating a holistic approach to the well-being of the migrant aged care workforce. A range of elements and themes are identified in this paper as integral to future policy, planning, and practice ensuring the well-being of migrant workers in the sector.

In addition, adopting the ideas of well-being highlights the benefits of moving beyond a narrow silo approach to migrant aged care workers as only a solution to worker shortage and instead encourages a shift to creative thinking and problem solving. Such a shift demands that government, the service delivery sector and community acknowledge that the well-being of migrant aged care workers is a key component for the success of the sector overall.

Overall, adopting a well-being approach to the appreciation of the experiences of migrant aged care workers highlights those factors that either enable or hinder integration, acceptance, and support in new or unfamiliar professional working environments.

There is ample evidence to support the concept of well-being as this perspective moves discussions beyond a single approach allowing instead for consideration of

the complexity, the interconnecting and over-arching elements that impact the well-being of migrant aged care workers.

Key Considerations

A comprehensive range of key considerations related to the promotion of the well-being of migrant aged care workers have been identified. Underpinning these ideas is the acknowledgement that some of these considerations are not new. For example, inequality and inequity in the sector has been of concern to government, policy makers, peak bodies, and service providers alike.

The following key considerations for the aged care sector are within a broader, more holistic discussion. Given the increasing numbers of migrant workers who will be recruited to deliver care to older Australians, it is the time to act for real change. There is a window of opportunity for creative and meaningful collaborations across the sector to ensure that the well-being of migrant workers is promoted as integral to the delivery of quality aged care services.

Lead and Innovate

1. That public institutions consider supporting The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing (The Centre) to facilitate the debate concerning the centrality of well-being of migrant aged care workers.
2. Initiate and support a national voice about strategies to achieve equity and security for migrant workers across the sector.
3. Implement strategies that will ensure that workers on temporary visas have access to professional training opportunities.
4. Continue discussions with Federal and State governments, community and other relevant sectors around the development and implementation of innovative programs that promote the well-being of migrant workers.
5. Drive discussions about the value and importance of an intersectionality and inter-agency approach across the different government departments to ensure the well-being of migrant aged care workers is of central concern in the development of relevant policy.
6. Promote the idea that a holistic view of the well-being of staff can be of significant benefit to both an organisation and the recipients of care alike.
7. Encourage management and other senior staff to raise awareness of the value of well-being in the context of productivity, reducing staff turnover and improved service delivery.

8. Initiate discussions that focus specifically on supporting the quality of experience and well-being of the workers who are employed in aged care services outside of Metropolitan areas.

Collaborate and Network

9. Build on and extend existing activities and collaborations with Federal and State government and service providers to improve the well-being of migrant workers.
10. Establish an aged care sector committee with representation from relevant government agencies, aged care industry experts, and representation from migrant aged care workers with a view to supporting the well-being of migrant aged care workers.
11. Build on existing collaborations and activities with employer bodies to develop protocols to counter racist and sexist attitudes in the workplace.
12. Facilitate cross-sector collaborations and partnership opportunities for sharing of information and training opportunities that focus on improving the well-being of migrant care workers regardless of geographic locations.

Inclusive and Responsive Policy

13. Support the development of policy and practice guidelines that include the ideas of well-being across the relevant government departments.
14. Consider the policy changes to ensure that past professional training and experience of migrant workers be considered along with the required current minimum standards for work in the aged care industry.
15. That the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other relevant Federal Government departments consider collecting regular data about countries of origin and languages spoken of all aged care workers on temporary visas.
16. Encourage Federal and State Governments to continue to monitor whether the Skilled Worker Labour Agreements that are currently negotiated directly between employers and Government can provide positive models for other aged care providers facing worker shortages.

Professional Education and Training

17. Encourage the development and pilot best practice models for training, accreditation, and enhanced career pathways for migrant workers.
18. Actively encourage the industry to formalise opportunities for professional staff to update their occupation-specific skills.

19. Support professional training and education opportunities recommended by The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety for all migrant workers employed in the sector whether full-time, part-time, or casual workers.
20. Provide information to staff about the formal opportunities that exist for the current migrant workforce to upgrade English language skills and professional knowledge.
21. Expand English Language training to include occupation-specific training.
22. Encourage organisations to provide tangible and timely opportunities for participation, decision making and promotional opportunities to workers from migrant backgrounds and on temporary work visas.

Management Practices

23. Provide management in the sector with information about the importance of providing opportunities for migrant workers to participate in professional education and training.
24. Work with organisations to inform them about the value of employing workers from a diverse range of backgrounds.
25. Propose the implementation of formal work-place orientation procedures as a strategy for breaking down fear and lack of respect toward migrant workers and improving the quality of care of clients.
26. Ensure that workers have access to and understand changes to relevant labour agreements, visas requirements and health service unions is central to policy development.
27. Negotiate formal workplace agreements to accommodate leave for migrant for recognised religious observances and cultural festivals.
28. Prepare and distribute information to all migrant employees about change in policy related to temporary visas, labour agreements and access to relevant unions.

Racism, Sexism and Discrimination

29. Distribute up-to-date information, guidelines, and protocols to enable organisations to develop in-house procedures for handling incidents of racism, discrimination and sexism in their workplace.
30. Urge organisations to take negative attitudes and inaction over claims of racism and discrimination seriously.

31. Design protocols and guidelines for organisational responses to racism, discrimination and sexism.
32. Facilitate dialogue with the sector about the role of racism, discrimination, and sexism in the undermining of staff cohesion, security and well-being.
33. Initiate the development of pilot programs that emphasise the value of diversity within the aged care workforce, and specifically to reduce bias, prejudice, and discrimination.

Future Research

34. Initiate focused research on the role of migrant workers in the delivery of home care services.
35. Collaborate with the service provider sector to explore the well-being of migrant workers delivering aged care packages in the home.
36. Instigate discussions and investigate the well-being of migrant workers delivering home care in the “black” or cash economy.
37. Track Aged Care Labour Agreements currently negotiated directly with employers and explore whether these arrangements are in the best interests of migrant workers on temporary visas.
38. Explore the value and necessary protections related to the recruitment of overseas workers for employment with aged care providers.
39. Deliver information and provide multilingual resources to migrant aged care workers on their rights, where to seek support, and their responsibilities, such as under the aged care quality standards.
40. Initiate qualitative research that explores and compares the relationship between migrant aged care workers and those recipients of aged care services.
41. Investigate what health and aged care professionals perceive as racist thinking and behaviour or unconscious bias and how their attitudes effects practice and the provision of quality care.
42. Track how the anti-racist framework developed by Australian Human Rights Commission July 2024 will impact the residential and community aged care workforce.
43. Explore the potential benefits of integrating specific cultural practices and experiences of migrant aged care workers into the delivery of quality care for older people.

Purpose

This discussion paper is intended to present an overview of the key themes that together provide a comprehensive understanding about the well-being of migrant aged care workers in Australia.

The Idea of a Holistic Approach

Simply put, a holistic approach is a way of thinking and acting that considers the whole person, a system or organisation not just the individual parts. A holistic approach can be applied to a range of domains including education, business and health. The holistic perspective as taken in this paper provides a snapshot of the distinct, yet interconnected elements that have been identified in the research literature, government and community reports.

Taking such an approach has offered a more nuanced understanding about the scope of both the challenges and opportunities currently being faced by migrant workers in the Australian aged care sector.

Importantly, this holistic approach places an emphasis on the well-being of both the current and future migrant aged care workforce at the centre of strategic thinking, policy development, research and best practice.

The Idea of Well-being

In this discussion well-being is understood to be a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. It is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic, and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses physical and mental health, quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute productively to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose. Focusing on well-being supports the tracking of the equitable distribution of resources, overall thriving, and sustainability for both community and individuals. A society's well-being can be determined by the extent to which members are prepared to transcend challenges.

The idea of well-being is a major underlying driver of policy coherence across sectors and encourages galvanized action. Advancing societal well-being helps create active, resilient, and sustainable communities at local, national and global levels.¹

¹ World Health Organization *New York 19 June to 22 July 1946*
<https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution>

Context

Following many international population trends, Australians can also expect to live longer and remain healthier over the coming decades, leading to increased numbers of people who will require a range of support, both in residential care and in their own home.

Currently the aged care sector is one of the fastest growing areas of government spending and this is expected to increase over the next four decades.

However, the number of providers in the aged care sector in Australia has decreased significantly since 2021 with an estimated 50 aged care facilities closing since January 2023. This trend is expected to continue, with the current deficit in aged care staff whether Nursing, or Personal Care Workers to rise over the next decade as demand outstrips supply².

Official figures show 50,232 nurses currently work in aged care, but the government forecasts demand for 55,572 indicating a shortage of 5340 nurses with a prediction that this shortage of full-time nurses will grow to more than 9288 in 2025 and reach 13,342 by 2030 in Australia.³

The industry is already experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining professionally trained and skilled long-term workers whether in urban or outside of metropolitan areas. In addition, geographical disparities in aged care services exist in Australia with rural and remote areas also facing staff shortages seriously impact the capacity for providers to deliver residential and home care services to older people living outside of urban areas.⁴

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, October 2018

The resulting 148 recommendations by the Commission published in March 2021 cover an extensive range of topics, with a focus on the provision of improvements to current support for the growing number of older Australian people requiring both aged care residential and home care services.

² Kelly, C. (2023). Home closures likely as financial decline continues, says insider. Australian Ageing Agenda. <https://www.australianageingagenda.com.au/features/sector-faces-home-closures-as-financial-decline-continues-says-insider/>

³ Australian Government Department of Health. 2020 Aged Care Workforce Census Report. Aging and Aged Care for Workforce. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/2020-aged-care-workforce-census?language=en>

⁴ Blackberry I, Morris N. The Impact of Population Ageing on Rural Aged Care Needs in Australia: Identifying Projected Gaps in Service Provision by 2032. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10204523/#:~:text=There%20is%20currently%20a%20shortfall,rural%20and%20remote%20communities%20alone>

In summary, the Commission emphasised the importance of providing additional hours of care for most people in residential aged care facilities, as well as increasing the number of home care packages.

The recent changes to Government aged care policy (July 2024) include the announcement of the provision of an additional \$4.3 billion to expand in-home services for older people who prefer to remain in their own homes and rely on federally funded home care packages for cleaning, nursing, other support services and the like.^{5 6}

Furthermore, it is anticipated that these additional funding and policy changes will lead to reduced waiting times for assistance, which currently is a significant source of frustration in the community. It is also expected that earlier access to home services will enable some individuals to remain in their own homes for a longer time, thus postponing admission to residential aged care.

Residential aged care will also undergo an injection of Government funds with predications that a minimum of 10,000 new beds would be opened per year over the next two decades to keep up with demand.

The report also acknowledges that the aged care sector faces a serious shortfall of skilled nursing and personal care workers. Newspaper headlines such as “*A knife fight for staff: Nurse shortage threatens aged care fix*” also draw attention to the challenges currently facing government and the sector.⁷

With a decline in the numbers of permanent residents or Australian citizens participating across the care workforce there is particular concern about the growing dependence on overseas migrant workers to fill the gaps in the workforce.⁸

A Culturally Diverse Workforce – A Snapshot

The Australian aged care workforce is increasingly culturally diverse. In the recent past there has been steady change in the composition of past overseas-born migrant workforce from England and Europe to a growth in workers currently including those from India, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Pacific Islands, Philippines, Timor-Leste, South America along with the steady increase in workers from Asia and Africa. In summary, 80% of CALD aged care Workers in Australia come from four cultural backgrounds. Workers who identify as being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD) comprised 49,475 or 35 percent in 2020 of the total residential aged care workforce include nursing and personal care attendants. The number of direct care

⁵ Paul Karp. Intergenerational report reveals spending in key areas to blow out to half Australian budget by 2063. The Guardian Sun 20 Aug 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/aug/20/intergenerational-report-reveals-spending-in-key-areas-to-blow-out-to-half-australian-budget-by-2063>

⁶ David Crowe, The Age September 12th, 2024.

⁷ David Crowe, Age September 1st, 2024

⁸ FECCA 2019 submission to The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

workers who identify as being from a CALD background in 2020 under the Home Care Packages Program (HCPP) was 13,192, representing 21 per cent of the total HCPP direct care workforce. The number of Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) direct care workers who identify as being from a CALD background in 2020 is 9,231, representing 16 per cent of the total CHSP direct care workforce.⁹

CALD Aged Care Workers

Segment	CALD Aged Care Workers in Australia (77,767)	% of all CALD Aged Care Workers in Australia
Filipino	13,781	18%
Nepalese	19,428	25%
Indian	21,379	27%
Hindi	3,772	5%
Punjabi	10,186	13%
Malayalam	3,769	5%
Gujarati	1,584	2%
Other	2,068	3%
Chinese	7,569	10%
Mandarin	4,937	6%
Cantonese	2,632	3%
Total for 4 segments	62,157	80%

Data in table taken from Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census

Currently, four out of five workers (83%) in residential aged care are women.¹⁰ Data from the 2021 Australian Census show that a significant percentage of overseas-born persons currently working in the sector hold a degree, diploma or certificate in another occupation unrelated to their work in aged care. For example, data from Greater Dandenong show that 1009 (15.2%) and in Greater Melbourne 509 (8.6%) workers are employed in less skilled work often as care workers and aides.¹¹

The Key Elements

This paper highlights seven individual elements or themes that encapsulate both the challenges and enablers to promoting the well-being of migrant workers in aged care. While each element or theme is distinct, it is emphasised that there is an overarching and inextricable interconnectedness, one to the other. Each theme or element may be considered either individually or together, but regardless of the approach, has the potential to provide an in-road towards enhancing a migrant aged care worker's sense of well-being.

⁹ Australian Government Department of Health 2020 Aged Care Workforce Census Report.

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/10/2020-aged-care-workforce-census.pdf>

¹⁰ Snapshot of Australia: A Picture of The Economic, Social And Cultural Make-Up Of Australia On Census Night, 10 August 2021 (ABS 2021)

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/snapshot-australia/latest-release>

¹¹ Census 2021, Customized tabulation-Persons born overseas and with a tertiary qualification, occupation by field of qualification, Victoria, 2021. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022 (Prepared by H.Brown, City of Greater Dandenong).

The first section of this report presents the overarching theme, the Well-being of migrant aged care Workers and seven related and intersecting sub-themes (**See Figure 1** below). Sub-themes are Conditions of Employment, Organisational Leadership, Training and Professional Development, The Workplace, Racial Stereotyping and Discrimination, Gender and finally Connecting, Belonging and Respect.

Figures 2-8 comprise a detailed breakdown of other relevant components and their relationship to the seven intersecting and over-arching sub-themes, as highlighted in this paper.

Well-being of Migrant Aged Care Workers

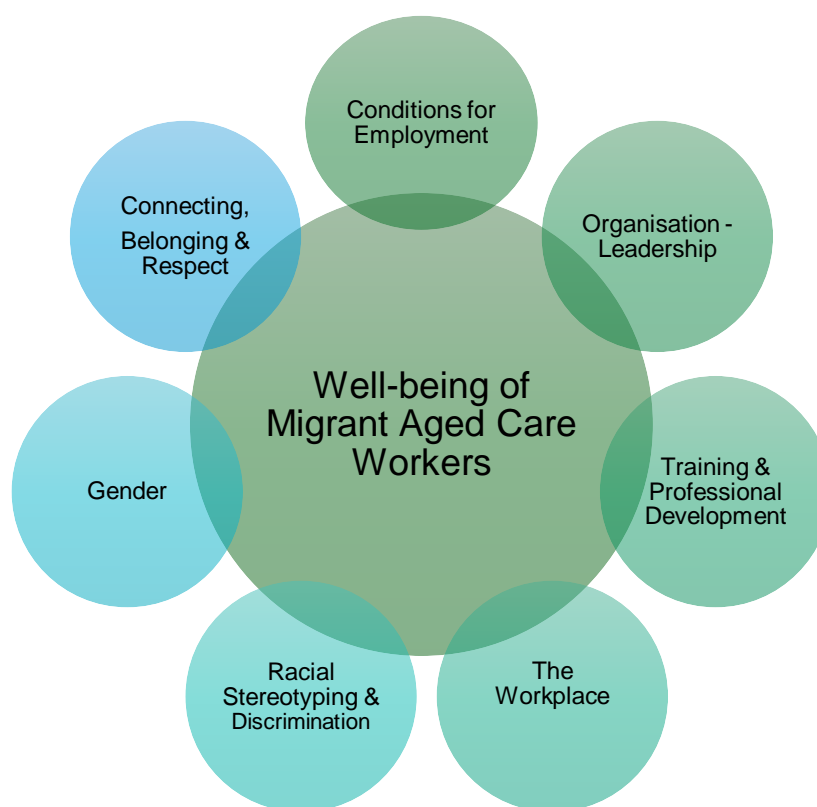


Figure 1. Key Themes

Conditions of Employment

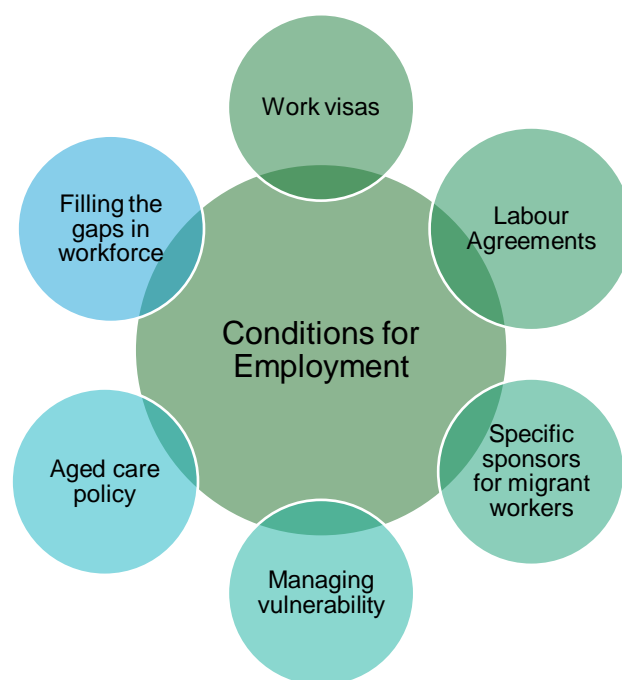


Figure 2. Conditions of Employment

Work Visas

While there have always been significant numbers of overseas born workers in the aged care sector, they have, in the past tended to be permanent migrants with full rights and protections of people with citizenship or permanent visa status. It is calculated that that currently 40% of nurses in Australia were born overseas¹².

Increasingly, the industry is reliant on overseas workers who currently arrive in Australia on a variety of temporary visas. These include international students and nurses or care workers whose overseas qualifications are not recognised in Australia.^{13 14}

¹² Aged Care Insite 2024/06 A Tripartite Approach To Address Workforce Shortages In Aged Care
<https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/AndrewGiles/Pages/tripartite-approach-address-workforce-shortages-aged-care.aspx>

¹³ FECCA Submission to Royal Commission 7th October 2019

¹⁴ Joanna Howe, Sara Charlesworth and Deborah Brennan. Migration pathways for frontline care workers in Australia and New Zealand: front doors, side doors, back doors and trapdoors
<https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/article/migration-pathways-for-frontline-care-workers-in-australia-and-new-zealand-front-doors-side-doors-back-doors-and-trapdoors>

Labour agreements

Working alongside business and unions, the new Aged Care industry Labour Agreement (July 2023) was negotiated in the hope that it would promote increased recruitment and retention in the aged care workforce. A recently negotiated (July 2024) Aged Care Labour Agreement has been designed to strike a balance between the opportunities that migration can facilitate to build a workforce while recognising the vulnerabilities faced by workers on temporary sponsored visas.¹⁵

Specific Sponsors

The Agreement also provides additional incentives for employers to attract overseas workers directly through two streams, the first the Temporary Skills Shortage (subclass 482) visa and the employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186) visa, including an expedited two-year pathway to permanent residency. In addition, organisations must have made recent and genuine attempts to recruit workers from within Australia.^{16 17} In recognition of the increased vulnerability of newly sponsored migrant care workers, particularly those workers participating in the Pacific Australian Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, will have an opportunity to speak to their union shortly after commencing, should they wish to do so.¹⁸

Filling the Gaps

The Government response to the Royal Commission findings recognises that overseas born migrant workers will continue to play a complementary role in relieving the workforce pressures in both residential and home care settings.^{19 20 21} As such migrants, a large proportion of whom who are female and who are on various temporary work visas, will continue be recruited to the industry, specifically to fill the gaps and thus shorten waiting times for services to older people.

¹⁵ Aged Care Insite 2024/06 A Tripartite Approach To Address Workforce Shortages In Aged Care <https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/AndrewGiles/Pages/tripartite-approach-address-workforce-shortages-aged-care.aspx>

¹⁶ Australian Ageing Agenda. Government, Fronditha strike overseas recruitment deal Linda Belardi , August 8, 2014

<https://www.australianageingagenda.com.au/executive/govt-fronditha-strike-overseas-recruitment-deal/>

¹⁷ Keira Proust ABC South East NSW Successful labour agreement in Bega Aged care facility could be solution to workforce 9 Nov 2022.

¹⁸ Memorandum Of Understanding and Palm Scheme Aged Care Migration Programs May 2023

<https://hsu.net.au/aged-care-industry-labour-agreement/>

¹⁹ Media release the Hon Anika Wells MP

<https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-anika-wells-mp/media/minister-for-aged-care-speech-12-september-2024?language=en>

²⁰ Skilled Migration Program – New Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/skilled-migration-program/recent-changes/new-aged-care-industry-labour-agreement>

²¹ Joanna Howe, Sara Charlesworth and Deborah Brennan. Migration pathways for frontline care workers in Australia and New Zealand: front doors, side doors, back doors and trapdoors

<https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/article/migration-pathways-for-frontline-care-workers-in-australia-and-new-zealand-front-doors-side-doors-back-doors-and-trapdoors>

Organisational Leadership



Figure 3. Organisational Leadership

Valuing Cultural Diversity

Strong leadership within an organisation is crucial to creating a working environment in which teamwork and support from peers can thrive. Poor leadership or ineffective management that ignores racism, discrimination or unfair treatment towards all staff undermines worker confidence and a sense of safety in the workplace.

Poor leadership also has a detrimental effect on the overall well-being of workers and especially vulnerable migrants. Clearly stated organisational ethics and values relays a message to service users and staff alike that here, in this place, racism or sexism in all their forms is unacceptable.

A multicultural workforce brings a range of individuals together. In workplaces where there is an appreciation of cultural diversity, difference, feelings of trust and cooperation can thrive.

Inclusion and Respect

Demonstrating that an organisation and its management are committed and values a culturally diverse workplace is fundamental to ensuring the well-being of all staff and especially migrant aged care workers. Management plays a crucial role in creating a workplace that fosters positive communication with and one that supports migrant workers.

Migrant workers often find themselves in environments that are new and bewildering and can be associated with stress associated with adapting to different work environments practices and cultures. What has been termed “acculturation”²² or the process of being exposed to a culture other than your own can also be disorienting.²³ Good leadership recognises that there is value in introducing staff and clients to other cultural heritages and beliefs. Familiarity with difference can foster a better understanding and greater tolerance between peers as well as enhancing feelings of support and acceptance in the workplace.²⁴

Strong organisational leadership that expresses the values of inclusion and respect plays a critical role in fostering a workplace that takes seriously cross-cultural communications between staff members and clients alike. In addition, good leadership also acknowledges the contribution of migrant workers by encouraging workers to take pride in their work and provide appropriate pathways for professional promotion.

²² Adebayo B, Nichols P, Albrecht MA, Brijnath B, Heslop K. Investigating the Impacts of Acculturation Stress on Migrant Care Workers in Australian Residential Aged Care Facilities
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1043659620947810>

²³ Berry J.W. Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S014717670500132X>

²⁴ Li Chen, Lily D.Xiao, Welfeng Han, Claudia Meyer, Amanda Muller
Challenges and opportunities for the multicultural aged care workforce: A systematic review and meta-synthesis
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jonm.13067>

Training and Professional Development



Figure 4. Training and Professional Development

English language proficiency

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (October 2018) emphasised the government's commitment to the provision of funding for increased education, training and professional development for all workers employed in the aged care sector.

There was however scant reference specifically to the barriers to participation or the provision of practical opportunities for migrant workers, particularly casual employees, to participate in government funded professional education, training and development.

Improving English language proficiency was acknowledged by the Commission as vital for strengthening communication between management, staff, residents and families.²⁵ English proficiency is central to enhancing the capacity of migrant workers to deliver higher quality care and professional work practices. Language barriers may undermine the respect of other workers, eroding pride in professional accomplishments, and compromise a sense of wellbeing.

²⁵ Commonwealth of Australia Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect. Commonwealth of Australia 2021 Recommendation 81 <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2021-03/final-report-executive-summary.pdf>

Better communication within potentially stressful working environments assists new migrant workers to navigate differences in professional and cultural practices. Improvement in English language skills and cross-cultural awareness can also help workers navigate levels of non-acceptance and discrimination that plays a central role in ensuring an individual's sense of security and wellbeing.^{26 27}

Language proficiency improves communication skills so integral to the day-to-day negotiations within a new working environment. Improved language skills also assist workers to increase their contribution to team building and to take a more proactive role in interactions with management, peers and older people.

Education and Training

Delivery of onsite education and training enables migrant workers whose hours and shifts are often limited, irregular or who face other obstacles to fully participate in training and professional development. Offering onsite programs within the working environment allows all employees, and especially casual workers, to access education and professional development programs more easily.

Recognition of overseas qualifications and experience in place of the current government and industry requirements for minimal qualifications may also support the pathway to professional development, inclusion and promotion for migrant workers in all aspects of aged care. Having professional qualifications and experience being respected and taken seriously in combination with clear organisational policy and practice directives provides the foundations for increased job satisfaction and acceptance within the workplace.

Inexperience or difficulties with new technologies can be alienating and undermining of confidence, self-determination and a sense of well-being, particularly for those workers who have achieved professional qualifications in their home country.

²⁶ Pam Nichols, Barbara Horner, Katrina Fyfe. Understanding and improving communication processes in an increasingly multicultural aged care workforce

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0890406515000031>

²⁷ Bola Adebayo, Pam Nichols, Karen Heslop and Bianca Brijnath .Migrant Care Workers' Perceptions of Their Working Conditions in Australian Residential Aged Care Facilities

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10436596231152204>

The Workplace



Figure 5. The workplace

Policy and Practice

As might be expected, workplace policies and practice guidelines for staff are in the main of a generic nature, mostly related to employment practices and may not necessarily consider worker diversity or differences between staff.²⁸ Management must take seriously integrating strategies and procedures for an individual migrant worker's introduction to the workplace to demonstrate that the organisation is serious about equity and inclusion. Clear management communication and directives may encourage a supportive working environment for all, and particularly if the organisation wants to take the well-being of its migrant staff seriously.^{29 30}

Valuing Diversity

Expressions of positive organisational values and respect for cultural diversity goes some way to minimising worker stress as well as facilitating harmony and acceptance within the workplace. Familiarising other staff as well as residents with different cultural festivals and activities in a safe and supportive environment adds to a sense

²⁸ Pam Nichols, Barbara Horner, Katrina Fyfe. Understanding and improving communication processes in an increasingly multicultural aged care workforce
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0890406515000031>

²⁹ Commonwealth of Australia Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect. Commonwealth of Australia 2021
<https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2021-03/final-report-executive-summary.pdf>

³⁰ Bola Adebayo, Pam Nichols, Karen Heslop and Bianca Brijnath. Migrant Care Workers' Perceptions of Their Working Conditions in Australian Residential Aged Care Facilities
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10436596231152204>

of inclusion, connection and belonging for migrant workers.³¹ This recognition is particularly important for those staff requiring negotiation of appropriate leave arrangements. In addition, migrant workers with family responsibilities and obligations may need to negotiate flexible shifts arrangements.

Workplace Stress

Stress in the workplace, especially for more recent arrivals maybe related to settlement issues or the need to improve interactions and engagement with both work colleagues and care recipients. Workplace health promotion programs such as stress reduction strategies along with general health checks and health information can assist workers to manage their health and well-being thus reducing lost days and salary due to mental and physical health. In this regard differences have been noted between the experiences of more permanent and established workers to those of more recently arrived migrant workers or those who are newer to the industry.³²

Stereotyping and Discrimination



Figure 6. Stereotyping and Discrimination

³¹ Eileen Willis, Lily Dongxia Xiao, Wendy Morey, Lesley Jeffers, Ann Harrington, David Gillham & Anita De Bellis. New Migrants in Residential Aged Care: Managing Diversity in Not-for-Profit Organisations <http://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0564-2>

³² Li Chen, Lily D.Xiao, Welfeng Han, Claudia Meyer, Amanda Muller. Challenges and opportunities for the multicultural aged care workforce: A systematic review and meta-synthesis <https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13067>

Stereotyping and Racism

Racial stereotyping and racism are often expressed through unlawful discriminatory workplace practices including lack of professional opportunities for promotion. Lack of provision of appropriate professional education and training also fails to provide adequate information to assist a migrant worker to carry out their duties effectively, leading to mistrust or stereotyping about the capacity of migrant workers.

Stereotyping can often be expressed through negative day-to-day interactions and creates an environment where workers are not respected or welcomed. Colleagues and clients alike make assumptions about the professional skills and training of overseas nurses and aged care workers in general. These interactions erode a sense of trust and are also reported as present between workers and clients with some carer workers unable to carry out their responsibilities due to what can be termed as every-day racist slurs.^{33 34}

Promoting career pathways and professionalising the workforce can also assist to address the under valuing and gender stereotyping through the provision of ongoing education, training and career opportunities. These initiatives can challenge the perception that aged care work is unskilled, thus increasing the status and visibility of skilled professionals.

Discrimination

Although discrimination may be subtle it facilitates fear of redundancy or dismissive attitudes that are anxiety provoking and may influence an individual's sense of health and well-being.³⁵

In addition, discriminatory practices may also be accompanied by fear of speaking out about racism and abuse often from recipients of care.³⁶ Regardless of the source of the abuse these actions can erode a sense of self-worth and confidence.

Racism may not be called out by management but its presence in the workplace effects the quality of teamwork and respect. A clear expression of non-acceptance of discriminatory practices within an organisation through policy, values and ethics can

³³ Temi Olasunkanmi-Alimi, Kristen Natalier, Monique Mulholland. African migrant women in the aged care sector: Conceptualising experiences of racism, micro-aggressions and Otherness
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14407833211023979>

³⁴ Ruth Brook and Rosanne Maloney. The 'elephant in the room' of racism in Australia's aged care homes
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-21/racism-in-aged-care-widespread-issue-in-australian-services/102119404>

³⁵ Lily Dongxia Xiao, Eileen Willis, Ann Harrington, David Gillham, Anita De Bellis, Wendy Morey, Lesley Jeffers. Developing the multicultural workforce to improve the quality of care for residents: Final report
https://researchnow-admin.flinders.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/16365873/Developing_the_multicultural_workforce_final_report.pdf

³⁶ Deborah Magee, Marguerite Bramble, Holly Randell-Moon, Jola Stewart-Bugg, Julian Grant. Understanding and responding to racism and the provision of culturally safe care by interdisciplinary health professionals in the aged care sector in regional, rural and remote areas: a scoping review
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38449108/>

assist in providing supportive and cohesive environments for all the workforce especially migrant workers.³⁷

Gender

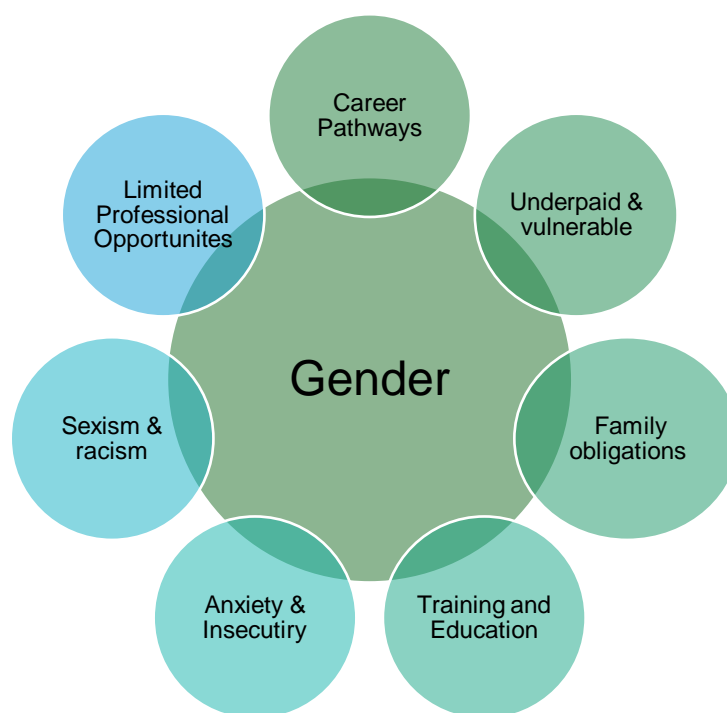


Figure 7. Gender

Career Pathways

Most of the aged care workforce in 2023 were women. Across all service care types an estimated 85.8% identified as women.³⁸ A significant number of these workers are females from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and migrant backgrounds.

Only scant attention has been given to the disparities in the workplace that migrant women often face. These disparities include a sense of increased vulnerability because female workers are more likely to be subject to prolonged casual work status, insufficient working hours, and underutilising and undervaluing of their skills and experiences.³⁹ ⁴⁰This insecurity can reinforce vulnerability and an erosion of a

³⁷ Mapping government anti-racism programs and policies July 2024 Australian Human Rights Commission <https://humanrights.gov.au/>

³⁸ 2023 Aged Care Provider Workforce Survey AIHW. <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/topics/aged-care-workforce/2023-aged-care-provider-workforce-survey#survey.intro>

³⁹ Joanna Howe, Sara Charlesworth and Deborah Brennan. Migration pathways for frontline care workers in Australia and New Zealand: front doors, side doors, back doors and trapdoors <https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/article/migration-pathways-for-frontline-care-workers-in-australia-and-new-zealand-front-doors-side-doors-back-doors-and-trapdoors>

⁴⁰ Sara Charlesworth and Linda Isherwood. Migrant aged-care workers in Australia: do they have poorer-quality jobs than their locally born counterparts https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341133466_Migrant_aged-care_workers_in_Australia_do_they_have_poorer-quality_jobs_than_their_locally_born_counterparts

sense of well-being. Disparities in the workplace include failure to recognise overseas professional training and competency, unique skills or qualities that these women contribute to their workplace.⁴¹

In addition, responsive government policy and sector practices that acknowledge the potential for exploitation of migrant workers, may go some way in ensuring that attainable career paths are available along with cultural safety, competency and responsiveness training across the workforce especially for women.⁴² In turn, such initiatives may work to improve recognition of the capacity of this female dominated workforce.

Colleagues and clients alike make assumptions about the professional skills of migrant women, particularly recent arrivals, the outcome of which maybe intentional or unintentional racism and racist actions.⁴³ A worker's ignorance about the workplace is either created, maintained or reproduced by a range of negative strategies. Poor communication and information sharing or withholding important and accurate information, devaluing professional qualifications and experience, or portraying a migrant worker as unknowing and suspect. Underutilisation of skills and experience also threaten the capacity for the promotion or career pathways for female workers.⁴⁴

Family obligations

Respect in the workplace is also achieved by workers being able to meet their professional responsibilities, however female migrant workers often lack social support networks or connectedness either through their community or supportive workplace colleagues. Having support is key to alleviating stress and anxiety when balancing work and family responsibilities. Essential to the well-being of female workers with responsibilities and obligations is the opportunity for negotiation of flexible shift arrangements including recognition and respect for religious and cultural practices and festivals.

⁴¹ Charlotte Overgaard, Matt Withers, Jakob McDermott. What Do We Know About the Experiences of Migrant Care Workers in Australia? A Scoping Study
Australian Journal of Social Issues Volume 57. Issue 3 September 2022 Pages 663-686
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ajs4.207>

⁴² National Aged Care Alliance Workforce Strategic Priority Group Key propositions for career development and pathways for the aged care workforce page 11 NACA position statement May 2023
<https://naca.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022-NACA-Discussion-Paper-17-Propositions-for-Support-at-Home-October-2022.pdf>

⁴³ Temi Olanokunmi-Alimi, Kristen Natalier, Monique Mulholland. African migrant women in the aged care sector: Conceptualising experiences of racism, micro-aggressions and Otherness
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14407833211023979>

⁴⁴ Virginia Mappedzahama; Trudy Rudge; Sandra West; Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo. Making and maintaining racialized ignorance in Australian nursing workplaces: The case of black African migrant nurses
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Connecting, Belonging and Respect



Figure 8. Connecting, Belonging and Respect

Resilience

Essential for success in adapting to an often new and alien environment is a sense of resilience and capacity for change. Settlement in a new country, and a new workplace can be stressful and potentially negatively affect productivity. A sense of well-being and belonging can be enhanced by formal workplace welcoming, orientation and integration procedures and a signal to other staff that professional qualifications and experiences of migrant workers are to be respected and taken seriously.

The impact of positive organisational values on ensuring harmony and equity within the workplace in combination with a respect for individual migrant workers also assists individuals to gain a sense of belonging and acceptance. Addressing acculturation stress may improve settlement and retention among migrant care workers, particularly as new arrivals may lack existing networks and community support.

Regional and Rural

Regional and rural workers face other difficulties adapting to a new working environment that can differ from the city. While rural environments may offer a sense of belonging to the place where a person lives and works, some smaller rural

environments may not have the capacity for intercultural exchanges.⁴⁵ Newly arrived migrant workers may experience a sense of social isolation with fewer networks of support from cultural or language communities particularly in some regional and rural communities. Rural workers may also face poor support networks, irregular transport and most importantly lack of housing availability in regional and rural areas.^{46 47} Due to difficulties in attracting and retaining staff to locations outside of the city, migrant workers often face excessive workloads, poorer pay and casual employment contracts.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Monika Winarnita, Masa Higo, Thomas R. Klassen & Irene Blackberry. Asian female migrant aged care workers in regional Australia and social resilience
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10037-022-00175->

⁴⁶ Care Alliance Workforce Strategic Priority Group Key propositions for career development and pathways for the aged care workforce page 12 NACA position statement May 2023

⁴⁷ Keira Proust. Successful Labour Agreement in Bega aged care facility could be solution to workforce shortages. ABC News Southeast NSW Wed 9 Nov 2022

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In Conclusion

Overall, adopting a well-being approach such as in this report indicates that there are a range of factors that either enable or hinder integration, acceptance and support of migrant aged care workers in their professional working environments.

There is ample evidence to support the value of adopting a holistic view as this perspective moves discussions beyond a silo approach allowing instead for consideration of the interconnecting and over-arching elements that impact the well-being of migrant aged care workers.

Furthermore, a holistic approach encourages creative thinking and problem solving specifically related to ensuring the well-being of workers. This paper offers several insights and perspectives that when considered together may also assist policy makers, peak bodies and service providers to do better in their support for the increasing numbers of migrant aged care workers as they go about their professional duties.

And finally, the delivery of high-quality professional care to a rapidly ageing population in Australia requires a skilled, well trained and stable workforce whose health and well-being is paramount.

For more information on this discussion paper, contact The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing on info@culturaldiversity.com.au

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