

Workforce Strategy Development – Your Voice, Your Vision

**Andrew Hayward
Head of Workforce Strategy
Ageing Australia**

May 2025



Workforce Strategy Priorities

1. Workforce Attraction & Retention

- Addressing critical shortages through targeted training initiatives
- Enhancing career pathways to support long-term workforce engagement
- Introducing financial and non-financial incentives to attract new entrants

2. Sustainable Workforce Models

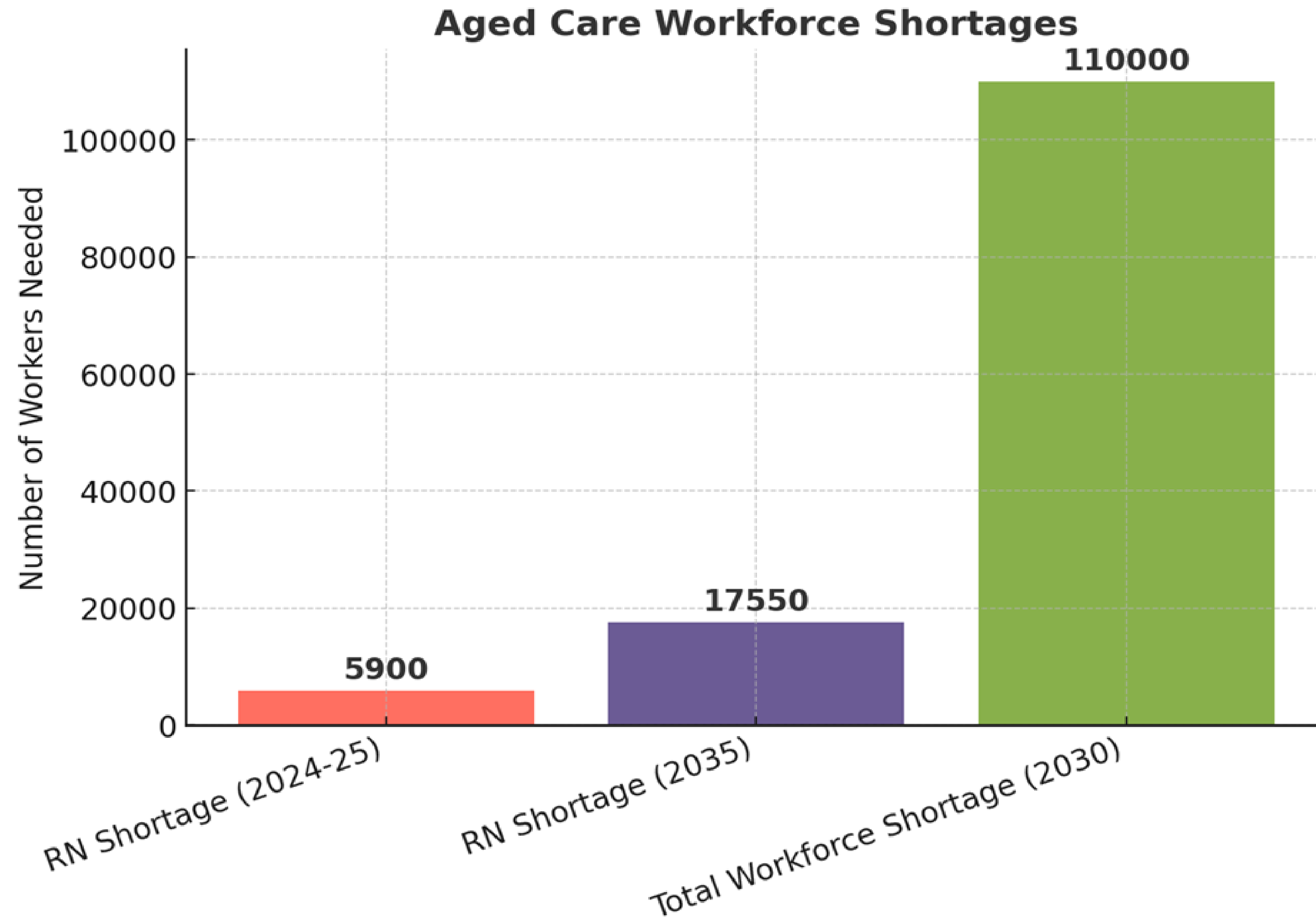
- Optimising the balance of permanent, casual, and agency staff
- Advocating for changes to care minute requirements to reduce the over-reliance on agency
- Building stable, team-based workforce structures

3. Regional Workforce Development

- Supporting local recruitment and training in rural and remote areas
- Improving employment conditions and supervision structures
- Strengthening training, housing, and transport access



Australia's ageing population: By 2050, 22% of Australians will be over 65.





South Australia Workforce Insights

- **Estimated 30,500 aged care workers (2023)**
 - 52% in residential care,
 - 48% in home care
- **Regional & remote SA:** 35% of the workforce
- **Over 70% part-time or casual**
- **Increasing demand:** SA's 65+ population will grow by 38% by 2041
- **Top challenges:**
 - Workforce availability, particularly in rural/remote
 - Recruitment of RNs and Ens & Retention of care workers, especially under 35
 - Over-reliance on agency staff in some regions



Provider Workforce Pressures

The aged care sector is facing an unprecedented workforce crisis driven by:

- **Increased reliance on agency staff:** Due to shortages, many providers depend on high-cost agency workers, reducing workforce stability and continuity of care.
- **Intensified pressure from reforms:** The introduction of 24/7 RN requirements and increased care minute mandates has created additional workforce pressures, particularly for smaller providers.
- **Workforce retention challenges:** Many aged care workers leave the sector due to insufficient understanding of the sector or role, lack of fit-for-purpose training and preparation for the actual roles.
- **RRR workforce gaps:** Attracting & retaining staff due to issues including housing shortages and the high cost of living.



Policy & Systems - The Funding Gap

Funding disparities: Around 60% of residential care providers operate at a loss.

Source: [StewartBrown, three months ending 30 Sept 2024](#)

State payroll taxes create financial inequities.

Rural supplement review: Ensuring adequate financial support for rural and remote providers to address higher operational costs and workforce shortages.

Worker accommodation review:

Examining housing challenges for aged care workers, particularly in rural areas, to attract and retain staff.

Uncertainty in home care funding:

Inconsistent funding models make it difficult for providers to plan for long-term workforce and service expansion.

Regulatory compliance costs remain high under the Aged Care Act.



Individual Factors Affecting Retention

Job Satisfaction & Meaning: Personal satisfaction, pride in one's role, and the ability to provide compassionate care foster retention.

Emotional Well-being: Over one-third of residential aged care staff report feeling emotionally drained or fatigued, which correlates with higher turnover intentions.

Burnout Prevention: Group-based cognitive behavioural training reduced staff absences and mental health symptoms, suggesting the value of stress-management interventions.

Supportive Relationships: Strong, socially supportive relationships with peers, supervisors, management, residents, and families are key to retaining staff.

Migrant Worker Needs: Migrant care workers often face casualisation, visa-related barriers, and cultural insensitivity, all of which undermine retention unless addressed by targeted support and training.



Workforce recruitment – migration

Providers face significant barriers to hiring and retaining international workers, including:

- **Complex & slow visa pathways:** migration settings cumbersome and costly.
- **Regional workforce distribution challenges:** migrant workers reluctant to relocate to rural areas due to limited housing and social support.
- **Lack of sector-wide coordination:** Providers operate in isolation when recruiting internationally.





Ageing Australia's Workforce Submissions

Pre-Budget Submission 2025–26 (Workforce chapter)

- **Establish a taskforce to develop a National Aged Care Workforce Strategy**
 - *\$0.5 million in 2025-26 to establish a National Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce to undertake data collection, sector-specific projections, and identify strategies to address gaps in skills, staffing shortages, and changing care demands*
- **Launch an Aged Care Worker Attraction Fund to provide:**
 - *Increasing funding for the Aged Care Capital Assistance Program to support capital works for on-site accommodation for staff.*
 - *Investing in training and skills development opportunities for aged care workers.*
- **Improving access to migrant workers to build a sustainable workforce**
 - *A sector-led migration advisory service for aged care providers to access and retain their migrant workers; and*
 - *An International Workforce Council to support cross-sectoral collaboration and develop innovative solutions to improve the aged care sector's ability to access migrant workers.*



National Worker Registration Scheme consultation

Key messages from submission:

- We support reforms that enhance the quality, safety, and professional standing of the aged care workforce.
- A well-designed National Worker Registration Scheme for Personal Care Workers has the potential to strengthen workforce capability, improve retention and mobility, increase efficiency, and enhance the quality of care for older Australians.
- An effective Scheme must be proportional to risk, aligned with related sectors, and responsive to the needs of aged care workers and providers.
- Poor implementation risks exacerbating workforce shortages and creating unnecessary regulatory burdens and costs.
- We urge the Australian Government to conduct a comprehensive review of the current Australian Qualifications Framework for aged care and seek clarity and alignment of the associated micro-credentialing structure.
- The existing inconsistencies are undermining quality training, workforce mobility, and professional recognition.
- 33 recommendations made.



Ageing Australia's Workforce Submissions

Review of Regional Migration Settings (Aug 2024)

Joint Standing Committee on Migration – Pathway to Nation Building Inquiry (Sept 2023)



Workforce development & innovation: Ageing Australia's Programs



Aged Care Regional Integration Program

Integrates Culturally
Linguistic and
Diverse Workforce

Features:

- Tailored training programs
- Mentorship and support networks

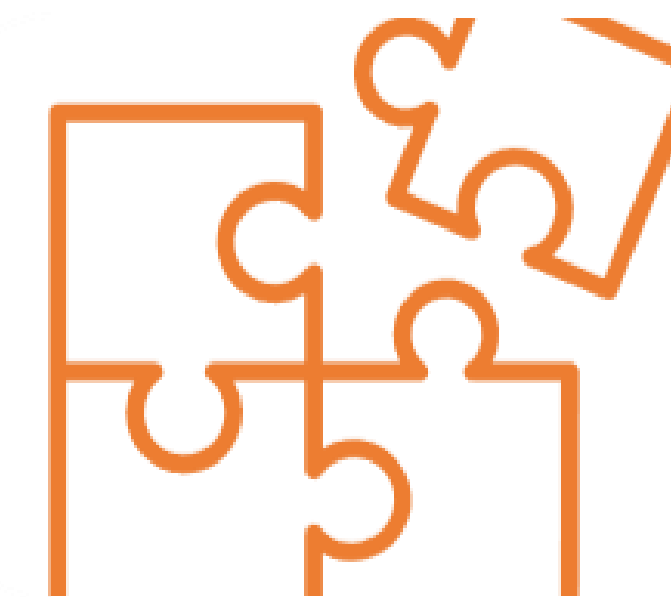


Leadership Program

Cultivates leadership
skills among aged
care professionals

Features:

- Training on strategic and change management
- Networking and knowledge exchange
- Focus on innovation and quality improvement



Innovageing

Encourages
innovation and
continuous
improvement in aged
care

Initiatives:

- Hosting the annual ITAC conference
- Recognising outstanding examples of innovation
- Connecting providers



Your Voice, Your Vision - Real Time Solutions

Strategic Insights

- What models or initiatives have proven successful in attracting and retaining workers?
- What additional supports would help providers implement these models?



Your Voice, Your Vision - Real Time Solutions

Policy Levers

- What specific changes to **funding, training, or housing** policies would support your needs for workforce growth?
- Are there state/federal levers we should focus our advocacy on?



Your Voice, Your Vision - Real Time Solutions

Workforce Strategy Feedback

- Do our draft workforce recommendations reflect your needs?
- What should we *add or refine* to enhance attraction, retention and sustainability?
- What **data or support mechanisms** would enable you to deliver sustainable workforce solutions?



Final Take aways

Workforce & Innovation as Enablers of Aged Care Reform

- **Workforce Development** – Attraction, training, leadership, and retention are key. Programs like Transition to Practice, Migrant Immersion, and Leadership build capability.
- **Technology and Innovation – InnovAgeing and the Workforce Hub** drive digital transformation, enhancing care quality and efficiency.
- **Funding and Policy Alignment** – Workforce and technology solutions must align with the Aged Care Act, backed by sustainable funding.
- **Collaboration is Key** – Strong partnerships across government, providers, and industry will drive lasting reform.

Strategic investment in workforce and innovation is essential for aged care reform.



EMPOWERING TOMORROW, TODAY.

ageingaustralia.asn.au