

## Decent Work Good Care

### International approaches to aged care

### Issue One: January 2019

This is our first newsletter to update you on the progress of our Australian Research Council (ARC) funded International Decent Work Good Care study and provide a snapshot of significant happenings in the four aged care systems of focus: Australia, New Zealand, Scotland and Canada (Ontario). An overview of the study is provided [here](#).

### Our Progress

To date we have completed five in-depth case studies, three in New Zealand and two in Australia, with another Australian one scheduled in early 2019. In a companion study, investigator Daly has completed [2 case studies in Ontario Canada](#). We have also undertaken a wide range of stakeholder interviews in Australia and New Zealand and made significant progress mapping the different aged care systems in all four countries. In observing residential and home care services on the ground, the policy differences and implications of varying aged care systems, policies and employment regulation are becoming clearer. A universal challenge in the countries of focus is providing frontline staff with sufficient time to provide unrushed individualised quality care.

### Case studies

Our case study approach involves us collecting data from interviews, 'shadowing workers', informal discussions with managers, workers and clients/residents, and from reviewing internal documents over a relatively short period of time. This helps us draw links between the 'everyday' life of aged care work, the organisation in which it takes place, and the national policy and regulatory context in which the work is done. In each case study our local and international researchers provide different perspectives on many aspects of the work organisation and care we observe based on their knowledge of the local and or/ other systems.

We are seeing many examples of very good holistic care for residents and clients with some employers choosing to formalise better staff working conditions, and some New Zealand government policies supporting pay equity and encouraging collaboration between aged care providers. Some are trends, others welcome exceptions.

We are hearing how physical design, rostering processes, career structures, multi-pronged training models, the organisation of catering and mealtimes, the connection between services and local professionals and their engagement with their surrounding communities influences not only the quality of care, but also the job design and the working conditions of frontline staff.

### What next?

In 2019 we will be writing up small snapshots of *promising practices* and *promising policies* we have found to showcase positive organisational practices and government policies that support decent work and good care.

## What's Happening?

### Smaller home, happier residents

While residential aged care is increasingly being provided by large organisations in Australia and New Zealand, small household models that emphasise wellbeing and engagement in life in homelike environments are emerging, often within larger complexes. Recent research by Flinders University suggests that both residents and staff view them positively. Read the [Investigating Services Provided in the Residential Care Environment for Dementia \(INSPIRED\) here](#). The importance of small homelike environments has been highlighted in the [Canadian Re-imagining long-term residential care study](#) and is also emerging in our current case studies. But how small is too small? If settings are too small residents have a lower chance of finding someone they connect with, and staff may find their work teams too small and their roles too broad. Read more in the chapter titled '[Space matters](#)' in '[Physical Environments for long-term care: Ideas worth sharing](#)' .

### Australian Royal Commission into Aged Care

The Honourable Justice Joseph McGrath and Ms Lynelle Briggs AO have been appointed the Commissioners to lead the Australian [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#) established in October 2018. [The Terms of Reference](#) suggest a wide-ranging inquiry encompassing all segments of aged care, and investigating service quality, abuse, and 'systemic failures'. The Inquiry will seek suggestions on delivering services to people with dementia, and young people with disabilities in aged care, ways to strengthen the system and ensure person-centred approach, greater engagement with families and carers and sustainable approaches, innovative models, increased use of technology, investing in the aged care workforce, and capital infrastructure.

A preliminary hearing will be held in Adelaide on Friday, 18 January 2019, and approved service providers have been invited to make early submissions through a [provider on-line survey](#). Commissioners will provide an interim report on 31 October 2019 and the final report on 30 April 2020.

### Canada – personal support worker registry

In February 2018 the Ontario Government launched the mandatory Personal Support Worker Registry for the estimated 100,000 personal support workers employed in province of Ontario. The registry provides oversight of the PSW workforce verifying PSW's credentials, conduct, and competence. The registry is bringing PSWs in line with other health care workers in Ontario whose background information is accessible through an online database. PSWs are not required to be registered in the other countries involved the Decent Work Good Care study. Visit the [PSW Registry](#) website.

### NZ – pay equity settlement and linked improvements in conditions

When Decent Work Good Care researchers visited New Zealand early this year we heard a great deal about the pay equity settlement that came into effect in July 2017. The former NZ National Party Government introduced a \$2 billion [Pay Equity Settlement](#) for the 55,000 care and support workers in New Zealand's aged and disability residential care and home and community support services. The settlement originated from the TerraNova pay equity claim brought by the E tū union on behalf of care worker, Kristine Bartlett. The claim argued that there was systemic undervaluation of care and support work because it was mainly performed by women. The settlement led to significant pay rises for support and care workers. When it came into effect workers received pay

rises of between 15 and 50 percent depending on their qualifications and experience, which resulted in pay increases as much as \$500 a fortnight for some (see [Pay Equity Settlement wage rates](#)).

There have also been two linked improvements to aged care worker conditions. The NZ Government agreed that home care workers' travel time between clients was work time, and provided significant funding to enable aged care providers to cover these costs. There has also been an agreement to 'regularise' the hours that aged care workers work. This will ensure that the majority of workers are employed on guaranteed hours, support training for career progression, and ensure that workers are paid for their required skills, with the introduction of caseloads to ensure safe and fair staffing levels.

In Australia, the 2012 Equal Remuneration case that provided significant pay increases for support workers covered under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHCADS) Industry Award 2010, excluded workers classified as 'home care employees'. Equal pay in aged care appears to be back on the political agenda, however. In December 2018 the opposition Australian Labor Party announced it would push for pay equity through changes to increase pay orders in female-dominated industries, including aged care. [Read more](#)

## Economic benefits linked to better worker conditions

Modelling by Flinders University indicates increasing the level and skill base of aged care workers would be at least benefit cost neutral. The Australian Industrial Transformation Institute's report modelled the financial and cost benefit implications of recommendations made in the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Foundation's (ANMF) 2016 National Aged Care Staffing and Skills Mix Report. The report found that while growing demand and increasing acuity of residents will increase costs over time, financial offsets and quality of life benefits will grow at a greater rate. Financial offsets will result from improved cost efficiencies, such as reduced workforce attrition and improved operational efficiency, increased taxation from higher staff wages and reduced resident transfers to acute hospitals. [Full report](#)

When New Zealand's former National Government was passing the Care and Support Worker's (pay equity) Settlement Agreement Bill in parliament, Former National Party MP, Dr Shane Reti highlighted the economic benefits of a wage rise for this large and expanding workforce and for the economy. In the final reading of the Bill, Dr Reti stated: 'The economic impact for the 2,000-plus Northland healthcare workers, at an extra \$100 per week, is \$10.5 million into the local economy per annum.' [Hear his statement here](#) (under 'selected external videos')

## In the news

### Australia

[Health and aged care pay gap increases again](#)

