

Issues paper focus: employment models in aged care, and the effects that policies and procedures to preference the direct employment of aged care workers would have on the sector.

The study stems from a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (the Royal Commission) that aged care providers be required to preference direct employment of workers engaged to provide personal care and nursing services. The recommendation appears intended to address a reported increase in the use of independent contractors and workers sourced through digital platforms in aged care.

This study will look at the use of indirect employment in aged care — with a focus on independent contractors (including those in labour hire agencies) and workers engaged through digital platforms in residential and home-based aged care, and the implications for consumers, the aged care workforce and aged care providers – *focusing on nursing and personal care workers*.

Considerations from Yorke and Northern Local Health Network:

The YNLHN does experience a need to engage agency staffing from time to time but is not overall a high user of this type of indirect employment. However we wish to draw the study authors attention to some of the key challenges we experience on a daily basis in a wide geographical regional areas in the provision of both residential and community aged care services:

- Challenges in direct staffing capacity that includes sufficient staffing to cover sickness, training and leave arrangements.
- Sector-wide workforce shortages and constrained skilled migration
- Additional pressures on nursing capacity resulting from COVID-19 impacts including close contact isolation and actual COVID-19 staff cases
- Predominantly female and ageing workforce
- Hospital-based acute care roles may appear more attractive in terms of variety and development potential compared to aged care
- The aged care sector generally is experiencing poor publicity, especially regarding wages and general workplace benefits of working within aged care. This is happening Nationally
- Working in aged care is physically and emotionally demanding roles
- Challenging geographical regional settings also impacted by low availability of worker accommodation in regional towns
- Increasing acuity and expectations of residents can be challenging for some staff
- Challenging, complex and highly resource intensive regulatory environment
- Additional care minutes requirements through the Aged Care Reform Agenda
- Strong competition for staff both within and external to YNLHN – challenging for all aged care providers in the area
- The provision of services, especially those delivered in the home setting, are restricted due to the availability of staff particularly in certain areas – challenging for all aged care providers in the area
- Recruitment and retention of staff across the aged care continuum is an ongoing focus for the LHN