

Productivity Commission
Caring for Older Australians

15 November 2010

I have recently completed Certificate III in Aged Care. I also have a degree in Commerce and have been working in the finance sector for the better part of 20 years. I decided to make a career change and embarked on a course of study which I believe has been thorough and comprehensive. It has been a balance of class study, research projects and placement.

I have only 2 issues which I would like to bring to the attention of the Commission:

- 1 When I was deciding who to study through, I had an opportunity to study and attain the same certificate online or through private providers. Some were 6 weeks, some 5 weeks and some at "your own pace". Some courses didn't require placement. My initial thought was "what is this institute teaching that the others are missing by offering such a brief course". I had no training in aged care and wanted to genuinely do a good job. When in placement and discussing with other staff, it seemed exactly that. Those doing the courses in such a short period of time are not equipped with the skills to adequately do the job.

Online courses cannot guarantee that the person submitting the answers are the applicant or that they know the material

The residents of aged care facilities are frail and often times unable to express their discomfort, pain, anxieties etc and it is the responsibility of the staff to be able to recognise these things. If you are not equipped with the skills, vital information will go undetected which in a caring/nursing environment is dangerous.

I would like to see the Certificate III hold a minimum course content spanning 4 – 6 months including a minimum of 4 weeks placement. I would also like to see that the person doing the course is assessed in person on the material learned. .

- 2 In finance, I have held many positions. It concerns me greatly that the wages paid for someone to ring an account holder and tell them to pay their bill is \$25/hr yet the award wage for a PCA is only \$16.48 and industry rarely pays over \$20/hr. I have struggled with the notion that government funding only allows facilities to manage with this level of wages and that that represents the importance our elderly seem to have in the scheme of things. I abhor that collecting money is more important than looking after someone's mother. One of the students aptly coined "I get more money working a register at a supermarket".

Coupled with adequate training, reflective wages would see the level of care and standards across the board improve.

Hoping that this meets your requirements for submission.

Kind Regards
Wendy Thacker