

**PAID CARE POSTGRADUATE GROUP
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Experiences and Needs of Care Workers: Emerging Themes

Ro Horsford

School of Public Health, La Trobe University

In this PhD project, I am spending time with direct care workers who work in the homes of older people to elicit their experiences and their reflections on their work through an ethnographic method. The intention is to spend about three days with 10-12 workers as they move around the community.

The primary research question is “How do care workers experience their work?” Subsidiary questions are asked about the experience of working ‘on the road’ and in people’s homes. What is uplifting and discouraging about the work, what sustains care workers in their work, and what organizational practices help or hinder their work?

Analysis of early data from the initial participants is picking up themes around:

- casual/ shift work, money, and status;
- working in someone else’s territory - carefulness, relationship with the client, satisfaction and meaning;
- taking up this work in middle age, and looking after yourself;
- relationship with care provider agency; and
- what is found to be stressful.

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Working 'for-profit' in aged care: An Australian Case Study

Dr Sarah Kaine

*School of Management, University of Technology, Sydney
sarah.kaine@uts.edu.au*

The aged care sector is attracting increasing public and political attention as the implications of the ageing of the Australian population are realised. Much of the focus on the sector has centred on issues of financial sustainability given the growing demand for services prompted by this demographic change. Given that residential aged care is largely publicly funded, an area of particular concern is the activity of for-profit providers within the sector.

This paper examines the structure of the residential aged care sector and the involvement of for-profit organisations. Specifically this paper investigates the management of labour at Red Gum Manor, a privately owned residential aged care facility situated within the Red Gum Retirement Village in the south western suburbs of Sydney. Using regulation theory as a broad explanatory framework, this paper explores the interaction of ownership structure and the 'managed market' for aged care and how this relationship shapes the management of labour within the organisation.

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**The relative merits of public and private insurance
in providing care for older Australians**

Laurel Hixon

*Centre for Health Services Management,
University of Technology, Sydney*

The current system of financing aged care in Australia is unsustainable. Indeed, it might be said that the universal access to the public aged pension and disability support are likewise unsustainable for much the same reason. That is to say, while all these programs successfully spread the risk of longevity, disability, and need for aged care over the largest group of people, they do not spread that risk over time and allow for some level of pre-funding. As strictly pay-as-you-go programs, and with shifting dependency ratios, the tax burden is likely to reach levels that working Australians are unwilling and unable to pay. An examination of out-of-pocket spending by current users is likely to show that shifting this burden from public to private schemes without mechanisms for spreading the risk over time is equally untenable. The relative lack of interest or unwillingness to buy various other insurance products (life, disability, etc.) that provide benefits in later years needs to be better understood as public and private insurance both must be at the centre of reform strategies.