

From: Paul Baxter
To: [Community Affairs Committee \(SEN\)](#)
Subject: aged care sector
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It is with interest that I see a review is being conducted on the aged care sector. My wife, who is an extremely caring person has been a carer for the past 2 years and the things she tells me shocks me, however the problem is I believe more involved than just staff numbers.

The industry rorts the casual employment system to an extent I find hard to believe being even possible. They will keep the vast majority of staff on a casual basis even though offering over 30 hours a week on a constant basis. When the worker is finally offered a contract it is usually for only 16-24 hours a fortnight guaranteed, although once again the true hours equate to a full week. This allows them to hold additional hours over the heads of the workers but worse, they then only pay holidays based on the contract hours, giving no regard to actual hours worked. In my wife's last job she was allowed to 'salary sacrifice' and it made a huge difference financially but also psychologically when she saw the money earned. Her new employer says she has to wait a year before they will do it! Add to this the poor hourly rate to begin with and you have a recipe for high staff turnover, not fronting up for work (many simply don't arrive to work without calling) and a general disdain for the facility for the way they are treated. I dare say that not one of you people sitting on the committee would accept the terms of employment these carers are made to accept, at the rate of pay and lack of conditions they receive.

The aged care centres seem to be 100% budget focussed (and possibly profit driven) above being care focussed, and the government doesn't help.

The answer is fairly simple, reduce the staff turnover and you will have a higher on site staff head count on average. Increase the remuneration and job security and staff will stay. If you won't increase the hourly rate then at least push for the 'salary sacrifice' to be made available for all workers from the beginning of employment. It is a legal tax claim anyway. My wife earns about \$200 to \$300 a fortnight less now we have moved and her centre won't offer salary sacrificing for a year. She doesn't dare push for it or risk losing some shifts. She has gleaming references from work, the residents love her and she gets on well with other staff and the management. She has also never missed a shift or refused to do one when offered, yet she receives a schedule of 2 shifts a week. The psychological stress of not knowing whether she will earn enough for rent and other commitments is a constant worry. It also means the first job that comes along with any form of security and she will jump on it and the aged care industry loses yet another of its more dedicated staff members. I believe it is imperative that you push for more staff to go full time not just casual or permanent casual. It wasn't that many years ago that it would be illegal what these centres are now doing. This is not seasonal work and it is not unexpected peaks or troughs in employment requirements. These centres are rorting the system for their own benefit.

My wife does sometimes complain about staff numbers but that's more often when a staff member doesn't turn up and hasn't called ahead and other workers can't be bothered picking up a shift at such short notice. If you treat your workers with contempt they will in turn have no loyalty or go out their way to help.

Sadly the past and present governments should be ashamed of themselves for how they have let

the treatment of the elderly get so appalling. And you should be ashamed of yourselves if you don't come to decisions to improve the care of the elderly and for those that do the jobs the rest of us shudder at even thinking about doing. I can assure you the minute we are financial enough I will insist my wife stops working in aged care, without the salary sacrifice and job security it is not worth the distress it causes her each day. I most definitely at this point in time recommend anyone looking for work, not to enter the aged care industry.

Yours sincerely

Paul Baxter



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