

18 December 2025

Committee Secretary – Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

Inquiry into the value of skilled migration to Australia

Ageing Australia is the national peak body representing providers across the aged care sector, including retirement living, seniors housing, residential care, home care, community care and related services.

We represent the majority of service providers, working together to create a sector that empowers older Australians to age with dignity, care and respect.

We advocate for a sector that champions excellence, sustainability and innovation, ensuring our members have the tools, resources and guidance they need to deliver exceptional services.

We use our united voice to amplify our members' contributions and concerns to government, media and the wider community. We are committed to reshaping the future of ageing in Australia by fostering collaboration and driving meaningful change, making it a fulfilling journey. Our members operate in all states and territories, including regional and remote communities where access to a skilled and stable workforce is a daily challenge.

Ageing Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the *Joint Standing Committee on Migration's Inquiry into the Value of Skilled Migration to Australia*.

The sustainability of the aged care sector, and the well-being of the people it supports, depends on a strong, skilled, and stable workforce. Migration has long been a cornerstone of that workforce, complementing local training and workforce development initiatives.

In our Pre-Budget Submission 2025–26 ([Ageing Australia, 2025](#)), we identified migration as one of the three key levers to build workforce sustainability, alongside domestic training and retention strategies. Similarly, our Submission to the Review of Regional Migration Settings ([Ageing Australia, 2024](#)) recommended regional migration concessions to address critical workforce gaps in aged care.

This submission builds on these previous statements, offering evidence and recommendations to strengthen migration settings, ensuring we can continue to keep pace with demand and deliver aged care services that meet the needs of the Australian community.

Ageing Australia

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Recommendations

Theme	Recommendation	Rationale	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Workforce Strategy	Recognise skilled migration as a strategic, long-term pillar of Australia's aged care workforce	Ensures workforce sustainability, stabilises service delivery	DoHAC / Home Affairs	Immediate
2. Workforce Planning	Establish an Essential Skills Visa for Aged Care	Provides certainty and continuity for employers	DoHAC / Home Affairs	Immediate
3. Administrative Barriers	Remove Labour Market Testing (LMT) for ACILA occupations	Eliminates delays and reflects evidence of national shortage	Home Affairs	Short-term
4. Pathways & Skills Recognition	Introduce "Earn-as-you-Learn" and Essential Skills Visa pathways aligned to aged care qualifications	Builds sustainable and regionally distributed workforce supply	DEWR / Home Affairs	Medium-term
5. Strategic Migration Planning	Proactively plan migration for Aged Care workforce	Aligns workforce supply with local needs and supports sustainable care delivery.	DoHAC / DFAT / Home Affairs	Medium-term
6. Public Awareness	Implement national awareness campaign highlighting migrant contributions to aged care	Builds trust and social licence for migration	DoHAC / Ageing Australia	Medium-term
7. International Cooperation	Establish bilateral aged care skills partnerships with priority source countries	Supports ethical recruitment and long-term workforce exchange	DFAT / DoHAC	Ongoing

Economic, social and cultural value of skilled migration - term (a)

Migration delivers significant and enduring value to Australia's economy, society, and culture, particularly within the care economy.

Economic value

The aged care and community care sector in Australia employs an estimated 549,000 people across all service types, including around 456,000 aged care workers. Workforce demand will continue to grow significantly as the population ages.¹ Current projections by workforce analysts predict substantial shortfalls in the coming decade. For example, some modelling indicates a shortfall of more than 110,000 aged care workers by 2030 if workforce growth does not keep pace with demand. Other long-term estimates project 400,000 more workers will be needed by 2050 to meet care needs. Skilled migration is considered an important part of addressing these workforce challenges.

Migrant workers in aged care:

- Fill critical shortages that cannot be met through domestic supply alone;
- Prevent service withdrawal and closure, especially in regional areas; and
- Reduce the sector's dependence on high-cost agency labour, improving provider viability.

Ageing Australia's members consistently report that access to migrant workers enables continuity of care and stabilises operational costs, directly improving quality and supporting the financial sustainability of services.

Social and cultural value

Migration also brings profound social and cultural benefits. Approximately one-third of direct care workers were born overseas, bringing linguistic and cultural diversity that enhances the inclusivity and responsiveness of care for older Australians – many of whom come from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.²

Migrants also contribute to community cohesion in rural and regional areas, where their presence sustains local economies, schools, and services.³ Skilled migration thus benefits not only the care sector but also regional Australia's broader social and economic fabric.

Recommendation 1

Ageing Australia's position is that migration is a strategic and enduring pillar of Australia's aged care workforce, not a short-term solution. Migration should be framed as a nation-building policy that supports both community wellbeing and economic growth.¹

¹ Committee for Economic Development of Australia. (2025). *Duty of Care: How to Fix the Aged Care Worker Shortage*.

² Department of Health and Aged Care, (2023). *Aged care workforce census 2023*.

³ OECD. (2022). *The Contribution of Migration to Regional Development*.

Effectiveness of current skilled migration settings - term (b)

The introduction of the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement (ACILA) has provided a dedicated mechanism to attract and employ skilled migrant workers in care roles. Ageing Australia supports the continuation of this framework.

However, several systemic and administrative barriers are limiting its effectiveness:

1. **Labour Market Testing (LMT)** – Despite overwhelming evidence of national shortages in aged care, providers are still required to complete LMT processes that delay recruitment by months.
2. **Visa processing times** – Inconsistent and lengthy processing times, especially for regional employers, undermine workforce planning.
3. **Housing and infrastructure constraints** – In some regions, particularly rural and remote areas, limited housing and infrastructure place additional pressure on workforce supply. These challenges require coordinated policy and investment responses, rather than a justification for restricting access to skilled migration pathways.

Aged care providers are reporting significant delays in onboarding migrant workers under current arrangements, with widespread impacts on service delivery across the country. Rural and regional providers are particularly affected. For example, one regional provider experienced a nine-month delay between sponsorship approval and worker arrival, leading to temporary bed closures and increased reliance on agency staff, with consequences for continuity of care and operating costs.

In addition to individual cases of delays between sponsorship approval and worker arrival, systemic fails in the aged care migration system have significantly limited worker inflows. For example, while the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement was intended to address workforce shortages, it has delivered only 249 offshore recruits over more than two and a half years.⁴ Most visas have been granted to applicants already in Australia, rather than to new arrivals, underscoring ongoing delays and administrative barriers that continue to limit workforce growth and service delivery.

Recommendations 2 and 3

Ageing Australia calls for:

- Establish a national Essential Skills Visa for aged and community care.
- Removal of LMT for ACILA-listed occupations; and
- Prioritised visa processing for aged care roles within Home Affairs.

These reforms will ensure migration settings meet both immediate and future workforce needs.

⁴ Egan, C. (2025). *Aged care visa deal brings just 249 overseas workers in 2.5 years.*

Targeting skills gaps and shortages – term (c)

Australia’s care workforce shortages are well documented. Registered nurses, enrolled nurses, personal care workers, and allied health professionals are all listed among the highest-demand occupations by Jobs and Skills Australia (2024).⁵

Migration must be designed as part of an integrated workforce strategy that combines domestic attraction and training with skilled migration and recognition of prior learning.

In our feedback to the VET Qualifications Reform Categorisation Project, we emphasised the potential of “Earn-as-you-Learn” models, where both domestic and migrant workers enter employment while completing Australian qualifications. This model supports both workforce supply and career progression while reducing underemployment among migrants with relevant overseas experience.

Recommendation 4

To better target shortages, migration settings should:

- Expand the Skilled Occupation List to include key aged care roles;
- Align visa settings with workforce transition programs; and
- Recognise international qualifications and experience through faster RPL processes.

Recommendation 5

Migration should not be reactive, but proactively planned and regionally targeted, informed by real-time workforce data and supported by partnerships with priority source countries.

Enhancing Public Understanding of Skilled Migration - term (e)

Public understanding of the role migration plays in Australia’s care economy remains limited. Too often, migration is framed as competing with local employment, rather than as a necessary contributor to sustaining essential services.

Ageing Australia recommends the development of a national awareness campaign, led jointly by the government and the sector, to better communicate the contribution of migrant workers. This could include case studies from regional and rural communities, profiles of migrant nurses and care workers delivering high-quality care, and clear messaging that links migration to workforce sustainability, national wellbeing, and the success of aged care reform.

Such an approach would align with the Government’s *Care and Support Workforce Strategy* and reinforce the role of migration as a complement to, not a substitute for, local workforce development.

Recommendation 6

Implement a national awareness campaign highlighting migrant contributions to aged care.

International Comparisons - term (f)

Australia can learn from comparable nations that have embedded long-term care workforce migration pathways.

For example:

- **Canada's Caregiver Program** provides direct permanent residency routes for qualified carers.
- **New Zealand's Green List** prioritises aged care occupations with expedited visa processing.
- **The UK's Health and Care Worker Visa** integrate settlement support and training.

These systems share common features: clear pathways, ethical recruitment, and settlement support.

Recommendation 7

- Create bilateral skills partnerships with key source countries (e.g. Philippines, India, Fiji, and Pacific nations); and
- Expand the PALM Scheme to include pathways to skilled and permanent visas for care workers.

Such reforms would align migration with workforce sustainability goals and ethical recruitment principles.

Conclusion

Skilled migration is a core investment in Australia's care economy, not a temporary supplement to the workforce. It plays a critical role in stabilising workforce capacity, supporting regional communities, and ensuring older Australians can access high-quality care.

Ageing Australia encourages the Committee to take a forward-looking approach that recognises migration as an enduring and essential component of the aged care workforce strategy.

We stand ready to work with government to develop migration settings that are efficient, ethical, and aligned with the broader aged care reform agenda.

We thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission. If you would like to discuss this submission or have any questions, please contact Andrew Hayward, Head of Workforce Strategy, at Andrew.Hayward@ageingaustralia.asn.au

Yours sincerely



Tom Symondson
Chief Executive Officer