



Aged Care Workforce Remote Accord Response to the Productivity Commission Interim Report on Building a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce

September 2025



About the Aged Care Workforce Remote Accord

The Aged Care Workforce Remote Accord (the Remote Accord) is a group of service providers and industry experts delivering aged care services in regional and remote areas of Australia.

The Remote Accord was formed based on the belief that every community – including those in remote and very remote areas of Australia – has an equal right to accessible, high quality aged care services.

The Remote Accord saw its genesis in the 'A Matter of Care: Australia's Aged Care Workforce Strategy' report; Strategic Action 11 recommended that the Government and industry support the establishment of a Remote Accord.

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Introduction

This submission to the Productivity Commission is made by the Aged Care Workforce Remote Accord (Remote Accord) in response to the September 2025 interim report on Building a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce. In giving this response, the Remote Accord wishes to ensure that the unique challenges facing service providers and their clients in remote and very remote Australian communities are given consideration. This submission draws on direct feedback from providers working in Modified Monash Model (MMM) regions 5 to 7 who have highlighted effective ways to build workforces in remote and very remote communities.

➤ Key Recommendations

The Remote Accord is responding to section 2.2 with a focus on the benefits of delivering aged care training to remote communities, and sections 3.1 to 3.3 with a focus on worker screenings and alternative entry pathways for remote aged care workers. The Remote Accord strongly agrees that investment in work-related training for smaller businesses, including remote aged care services, is beneficial. The Remote Accord strongly agrees that unnecessary occupational entry regulations (OERs) should be reduced or removed where they reduce workforce, which we have observed happening in remote aged care workforces. Our key recommendations are to:

- Deliver aged care training to remote communities.
- Streamline screenings for remote aged care workers, with an emphasis on reducing barriers in completing screening checks.
- Create alternative entry pathways for prospective remote aged care workers that do not require formal study.



➤ Recommendation 1: Deliver Training to Remote Areas

Workers in remote Australia rarely have the capacity to visit metropolitan areas for training, which can include getting their Certificate III in individual support (Ageing), getting a First Aid Certificate, or upskilling in areas relevant to aged care. To build a skilled workforce, remote areas need training delivered directly to their communities.

In remote areas, there are few opportunities to access training directly through local training providers. The lack of proximity to training centres means that workers must travel long distances, which is prohibitive in terms of time and cost. Additionally, online training options are not always a practical solution for remote workers. In many remote areas internet connectivity is not universal or consistent, which can make accessing online training materials challenging. Literacy and numeracy barriers are also common among remote workers, particularly in areas where educational opportunities are limited, and for many, English is a second or third language. Training programs must be accessible and flexible enough to accommodate these barriers.

Case Study

Challenges to Completing Worker Training

“[P]eople are not keen or confident enough to leave Fitzroy for training. Many people in Fitzroy have basically never left Fitzroy.

So, there’s been lots of times where we’ve offered people training or say if you want to do this job, let’s get you clued up on X, Y and Z. TAFE will do this in Perth, or somebody will do this in Darwin. That’s it. As soon as you mention that it’s gone, they don’t want to do it, not confident.”

– from a Service Manager working at a remote service

To deliver accessible and flexible training, training should be delivered directly to remote communities. Local training removes the need to travel to metropolitan areas and the need to have internet access, and allows training to be tailored to account for literacy and numeracy barriers.



The Remote Accord recommends that remote services should be given financial incentives to pay for trainers to travel to remote communities and deliver training. Most of this funding should be tied to training necessities, such as delivering First Aid training. Remote services should also be given a smaller pool of funding each year to use for upskilling their workers in areas that are most relevant for their community, such as culturally safe care.



➤ Recommendation 2: Streamline Worker Screening

Workers in remote Australia face barriers to completing worker screenings, such as police checks, working with vulnerable people checks, and NDIS applications. Workers that need to verify identity documents in person, but live in remote communities, may need to drive up to four hours to attend a post office where they can verify their documents. Additionally, many workers in remote Australia do not have enough documentation to meet the minimum 100 points required to complete applications. Some workers also have a previous criminal record that will disqualify them on a police check, with unclear avenues for recourse. Remote services need discretion to reduce or remove occupational entry requirements for prospective workers who cannot complete worker screening requirements but are otherwise fit to work in aged care.

Case Study

Logistical Challenges to Completing Worker Screenings

“We face logistical challenges in completing these checks:

Other employees or the Residential Manager must assist a majority of new locally based employees with online applications due to the lack of computer skills. This also means that on some occasions an employee has not yet applied for an NDIS check before they begin on site due to the complexity of the remote location. We do ask employees at these sites to undertake a police check but they still need assistance on site to do this.

In one remote location, a four-hour drive one way is required to visit a Department of Transport or post office for an employee to have their identification documents sighted and recorded. The Residential Manager has resorted to driving out a group of employees and returning them (fully paid) to achieve the application. Some locally based employees do not have drivers' licences (or other forms of ID) that can add complexity to the NDIS application process in the ability to drive there and in providing the required identification for an NDIS check.

In this location it costs a person \$145 to apply for a NDIS check, which we refund after an employee has applied. In other remote areas we have been told that for care and domestic workers, they need to be given \$145 so they can apply, rather than being reimbursed due to low socioeconomic status of some people within the local area.”

– from a Service Manager working at a remote service



The complexity of worker screening and OERs in remote areas drives candidates to seek employment elsewhere, such as roles where entry requirements are less intimidating, timelier, and more accommodating to the realities of remote life. As a result, aged care services in remote areas lose access to a workforce that is uniquely positioned to deliver culturally safe care.

Case Study

Police Check Screening

“There are certain things on the National Police Clearance, such as driving offences that really have no impact on them being a carer in an Aged Care Facility, so long as they can get to and from work.

I think a lot more work needs to happen on this to be able to employ people in remote areas as we do not have a lot of people to choose from. We have people desperate to get into the workforce, the organisation supports them, then suddenly you can't employ them because there is something minor on their National Police Clearance.”

– from an Operations Manager working at a remote service

“I have multiple examples of people we have hired that have had significant criminal charges or driving offences. I've used my discretion to evaluate violent offences, which have turned out to be tit for tat domestic violence charges related to a specific single relationship, or those who as an eighteen-year-old had an incident at a pub or club that has come back to haunt them years later.

I've also had driving charges stemming from rural areas where the police will often target and 'load up' Aboriginal people. I am accustomed to receiving more serious Adverse Disclosures that I'm required to make a judgement call on.

Many are historical, many involve domestic violence, and many involve alcohol fuelled incidents. I treat each one as an isolated incident and weigh up a number of things, circumstance, open disclosure by candidate, and the propensity for police to 'load up' Aboriginal offenders.”

– from a specialised provider of First Nations home care and aged care services

Changes do not have to be complex; giving remote providers greater discretion around worker screening and OERs can boost the aged care workforce significantly. Local employers on the ground in remote Australia know their communities best. Employers are well placed to assist



locals with registration and make key decisions around worker suitability and training. This could be achieved by creating a carve out with increased discretion for MMM 6 and 7 communities.



➤ Recommendation 3: Create Alternative Entry Pathways

Workers in remote Australia need alternative entry pathways to working in aged care that differ from formal engagement in residential aged care. Moving to a larger city to complete training can create barriers for workers wishing to enter the workforce. Alternative entry pathways need to be considered, even if this is as simple as being a gardener or a cleaner who is employed by an aged care service but does not hold any formal qualifications in aged care.

One way to create alternative entry into aged care services is by recognising the existing experience of community members already providing care in personal settings. Many individuals in remote areas have been delivering care informally or in non-registered roles for years, accumulating significant hands-on knowledge and expertise. Recognition of prior learning allows experienced workers to not feel excluded or undervalued due to their lack of formal qualifications.

Case Study

Remote Accord Menindee Project

Interviews with providers in the Murdi Paaki Region identified that a large proportion (estimated to be up to 90%) of candidates for aged care positions lacked training and qualifications or had not previously worked formally in the sector prior to their application. While many people in the community are young and keen to work, there is no recognition of lived experience or informal caring skills that they may have developed, in either other jobs or their personal lives. This is then compounded by limitations on both the availability of relevant courses and opportunities for financial assistance to become a health care worker.

Much of the financial assistance provided by Government is allocated to more highly skilled workers, such as doctors and nurses. The overarching theme was one of recognition of 'lived experience' not just of formal prior learning. As a result of the successful Yarning Circle and other stakeholder engagement activities the Recognition of Lived Experience Program was developed for the Murdi Paaki region, in the town of Menindee. This includes identifying skills in people who are not qualified to work in aged care but have skills that are transferable to the aged care sector, to increase employment in the Aged Care sector.

The Project Team continued to work with a regional RTO in the Murdi Paaki region to develop skill set training courses and RPL lived skills recognition, enabling recognition of informal caregiving in remote communities for those who can't access and complete full vocational qualifications, thus enhancing employment possibilities.



The results from Menindee were encouraging, with four local workers currently undertaking their training through the program. This is one example of how workers can have alternative entry to the aged care workforce in remote Australia.