

Longitudinal Study of Student Outcomes – Aged Care

Final Insights Wave 1, 2 and 3

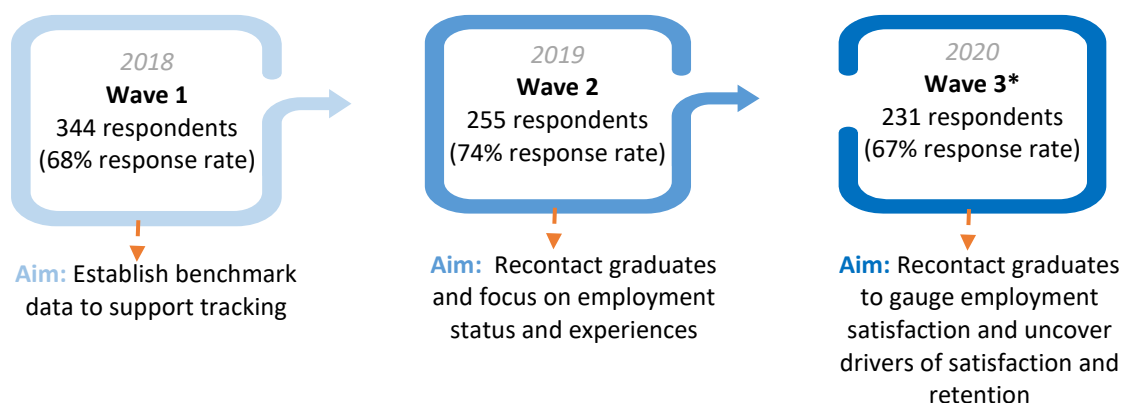
Introduction

Individuals who start working in the Aged Care sector are enthusiastic and positive about their experiences. However, over time, enthusiasm and satisfaction decline.

Demand for workers across the Aged Care sector is high, and forecasts show an additional 54,700 carer positions will be needed by 2025.¹ The sector however faces **significant workforce challenges** regarding attracting skilled staff, as well as retaining staff noting high staff turnover and low retention. This study aimed to better understand an individual's journey into the Aged Care sector, including course experience, employment outcome and job satisfaction to uncover reasons for leaving a job, and the sector.

Wave 3 represents the final survey conducted with a cohort of students who in 2018 had enrolled in or recently graduated from studying a *Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)* or *Certificate III in Aged Care*. Prior to Wave 3 being conducted, Australia's economy was significantly impacted by two key events: the 2019/20 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Wave 3 survey was therefore adapted to include questions on the impact these events may have had on respondents and their careers in the Aged Care sector.

Figure 1: Longitudinal Study into Student Outcomes – Summary of Samples Wave 1 to Wave 3



Note: *Respondents to Wave 1 and/or Wave 2 were invited to participate in Wave 3. Please note the majority of respondents in Wave 3 completed all three waves of the study, with a small number (21 respondents) completing only Wave 1 and Wave 3.

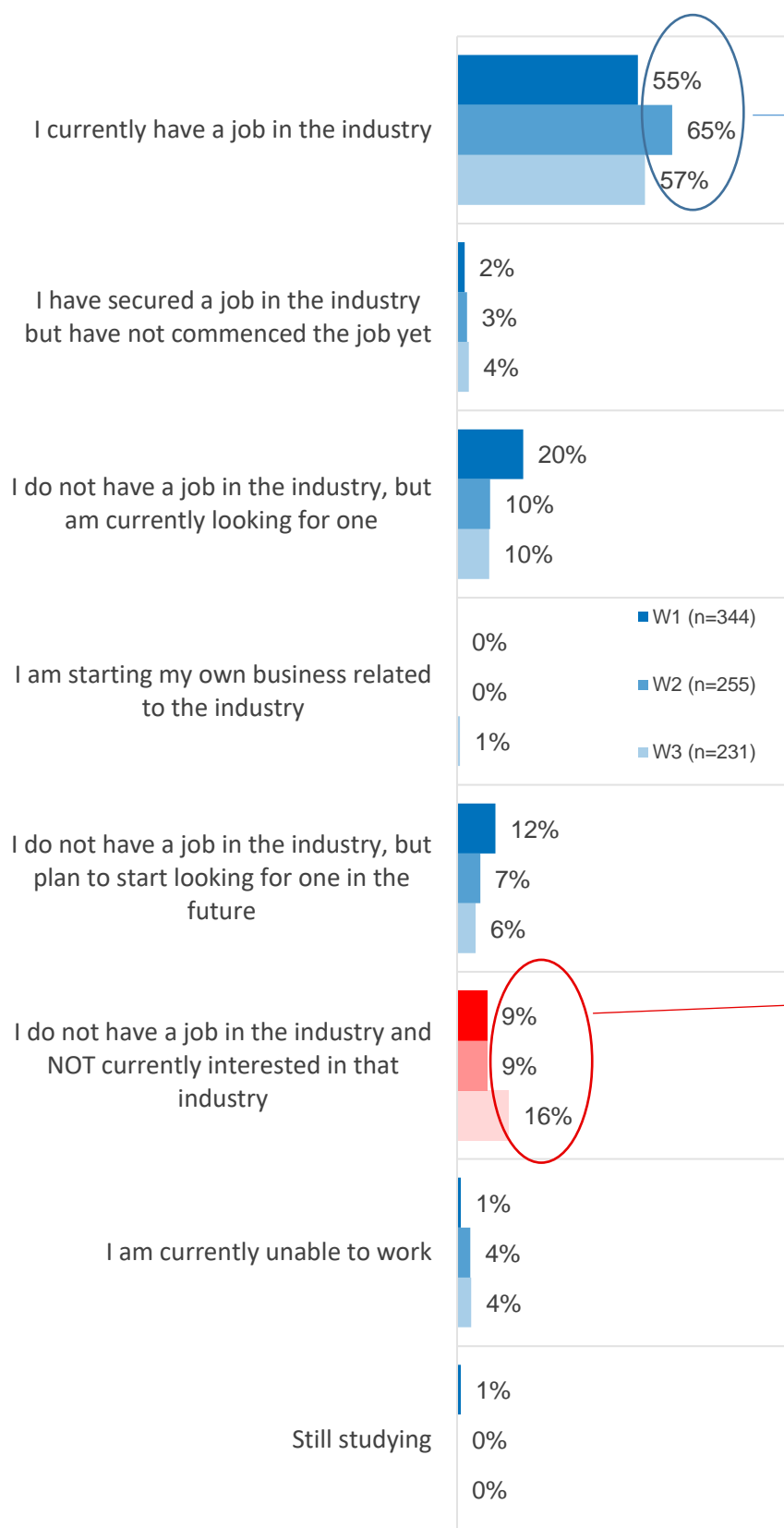
Learning Outcomes

- **Course completion is very high** – by Wave 3, 93% had completed their qualification while 5% had withdrawn.
- Reasons for withdrawing from the qualification included: changing job/career goals (n=7) or not being happy with their training organisation (n=4).
- **The primary reason for enrolling** in the course is for work/employment purposes (98% of students).
- **Course satisfaction is very high** – 91% were (net) satisfied with their course. Key course factors registering high satisfaction levels were the instructors (having relevant industry experience and understanding student learning needs) and course content.

The student's learning experience is very positive. Overall, the qualification is well regarded and considered highly relevant in providing key skills for jobs in the sector.

¹ Department of Education, Skills and Employment. 2020 *Employment Projections to 2025, 'Aged and Disabled Carers'*. [Available at: [Welcome to the Labour Market Information Portal. \(lmip.gov.au\)](https://www.welcome-to-labour.gov.au/market-information-portal/)] [Accessed 15 October 21]

Employment Outcomes across Waves



Employment levels fell slightly between Wave 2 (65%) and Wave 3 (57%).

Employment conditions for those working in the sector were similar across Waves:

- Primarily part-time (60%) and casual (30%) contracts. Only 10% work full-time
- One in five (21%) are working two or more jobs
- The median number of hours worked a week is 20-29 hours
- The median annual salary is \$30k-\$39k. Across Waves however, the proportion earning \$40k+ increased from 34% (Wave 1) to 47% (Wave 3)
- During the last 12 months, 17% had changed their main job in Aged Care.

COVID-19/Bushfires 2019/20 impact:

- 39% indicated these events had slowed their progress towards achieving their career goals
- 15% intend to train or reskill and move into a different sector due to the upheaval of these events.

Disengagement with the Aged Care sector and departures increased across Waves.

Whilst the number of respondents in the sample who left the sector was small (n=40), their feedback indicated:

- The main reasons for leaving included **mistreatment by colleagues/employer, nature of the work not stimulating, salary/pay issues and work hours issues.**

Those who had left the industry at Wave 1 were more likely to cite that the nature of the work was not stimulating. Mistreatment by colleagues/employer was a reason that was more likely to be given at Wave 3.

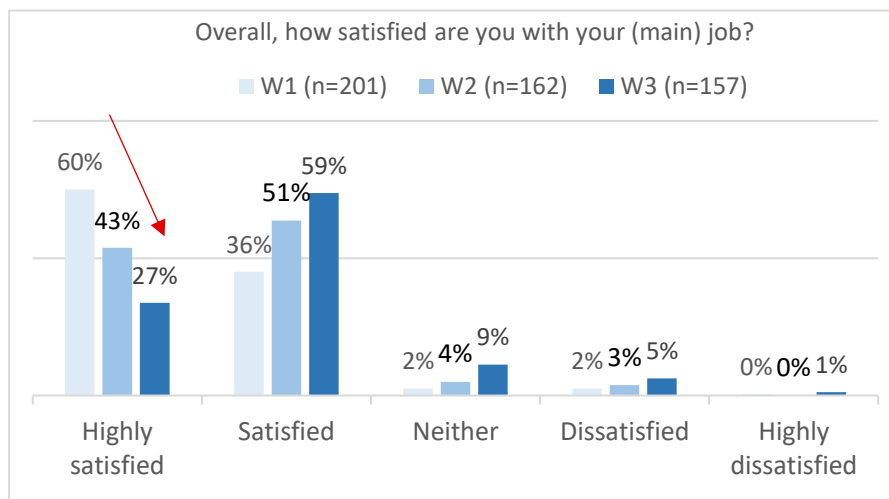
- The majority went to work in another sector, and most are satisfied with their new job.

Over the course of three years, the workforce 'leaving' rate based on this survey nearly doubled from 9% to 16%. The majority of leavers went to work in a different sector and confirmed they were happy with their new jobs therefore suggesting little intention to return to Aged Care.

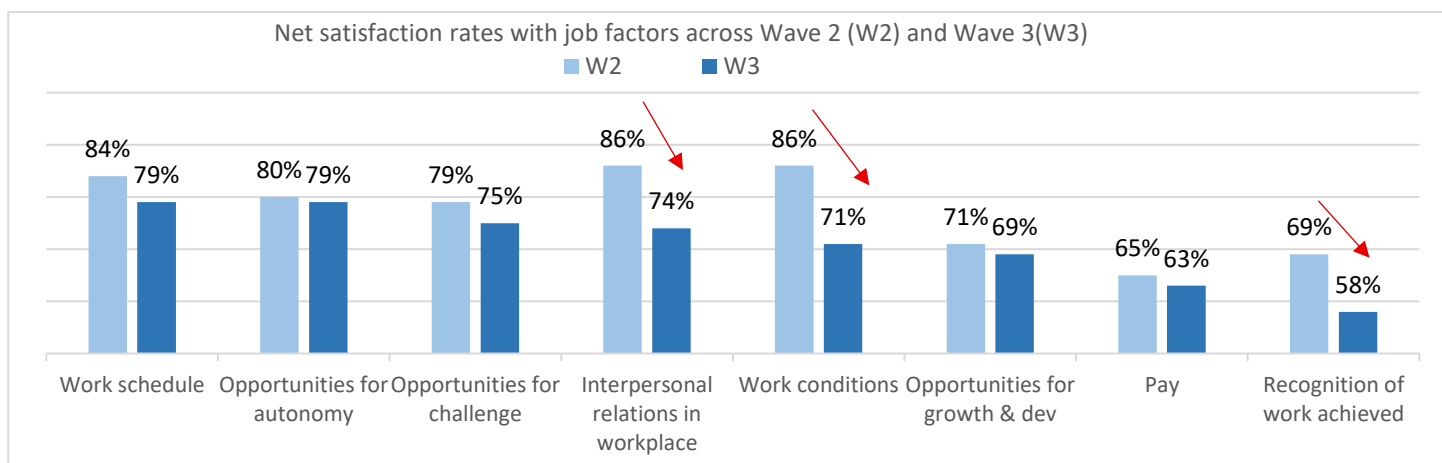
Minor although notable impacts for leaving the sector were also attributed to COVID-19 / bushfires 2019/20 events.

Employment Satisfaction across Waves

- Overall job satisfaction declined with each successive wave.
- In terms of those highly satisfied with their job, the proportion in Wave 3 (27%) was under half of what it had been in Wave 1
- Across waves, satisfaction levels with all job factors measured fell with significant drops in:
 - Work conditions (86% to 71%)
 - Interpersonal relations in workplace (86% to 74%)
 - Recognition of work achieved (69% to 58%).



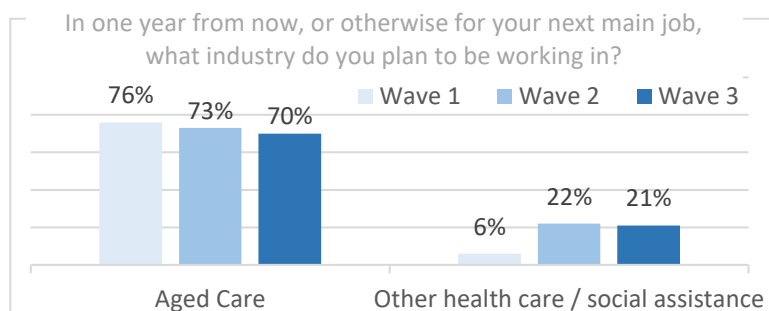
Note: 'Unsure' has been excluded and so W1 % may differ from the Wave 1 report.



Future career plans

Short-term (in one year's time) The proportion of respondents wanting to work in the Aged Care sector fell with each successive wave of the study (76% in Wave 1 to 70% in Wave 3).

Longer-term (in five year's time) Nearly one in five (18%) respondents working in Aged Care did not plan to work in the sector in five year's time.



Base: Currently working in industry, W1 (n=205), W2 (n=169), W3 (n=159)

Recommendations for improving conditions in the Aged Care sector

The top 5 suggestions on how to improve the sector were:

1. More staff / a better staff ratio (32%)
2. Better pay/benefits (21%)
3. More appropriate / experienced staff to work with (19%)
4. Better hours / work conditions (11%)
5. More recognition of work (8%).

As individuals spend time working in the Aged Care sector, satisfaction levels fall noticeably. This transitions into decisions to leave the sector either in the short-term or long-term.

Triggers for leaving the sector cover three key themes:

- Workplace treatment (i.e. staffing)
- Work conditions (i.e. hours and pay)
- Work recognition (i.e. lack of)