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Researchers call for stigma reduction to meet aged care employment demand

A new report on the future of the aged care sector has called for a public awareness strategy to reduce discrimination and stigma related to ageing and care work.

The Institute for the Study of Social Change report *Insight Four: Planning for the Future of Aged Care* highlights the need to change perceptions around older Australians and their paid carers in order to meet growing employment demand.

"The care sector overall is the largest – and fastest growing – source of jobs in Tasmania and improving perceptions among those outside and inside the sector will improve care for older Tasmanians and general community wellbeing," the report states.

"Attracting thousands of additional workers needed to meet demand for aged care services in the coming decades will require a dramatic shift not only in employment conditions and training opportunities but also in the portrayal, status and desirability of such roles."

Report authors, University of Tasmania researchers Dr Susan Banks and Lisa Denny, argue that while the economic and fiscal challenges of ageing populations are well documented, there is too little public and political focus on the positives.

"The ageing population and workforce augurs well for increasing labour force participation and employment, and reducing underemployment across Australia and in Tasmania specifically," Ms Denny, a workforce demographer, said.

"Growth in new and expanding industries to cater for the needs of an older population will create employment demand in Tasmania, as will replacement labour, particularly in the health care and social assistance sector."

The report is based on a recent Tasmanian study, led by Dr Banks, which found quality of care and the health of support relationships can be impacted by negative commentary around ageing and aged care.

One of the report's recommendations is the development of guidelines for reporting on older people and aged care workers, potentially based on the successful [Mindframe National Media Initiative](#) for mental illness.

"Changing the way older Australians are discussed in the media is an important first step in shifting public perceptions about population ageing and, ultimately, enhancing the wider social and economic value of the growing aged care sector," Dr Banks said.

Further information: Read the Institute for the Study of Social Change Insight Report *Planning for the Future of Aged Care: Changing Attitudes towards Older Australians and Aged Care Workers* at www.utas.edu.au/social-change

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