

Media Release



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UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

THE FRAGILE STATE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Today the University of South Australia and SACOSS are releasing a report into the fragile state of the community services workforce in South Australia. *Careers at the Coalface*, a research project conducted over three years included information collected on more than 1000 organisations. The report is a wake up call that shows the depth of the challenge ahead.

The report predicts an increase of 30,000 jobs in the sector across Australia over the next 5 years. South Australia must develop a robust and high quality workforce as this is the workforce that will continue to support those most vulnerable in our community.

Professor Ed Carson, from Social Policy Research Group at the University of South Australia' said " South Australia has the most obviously ageing population in Australia, as people age they require greater support services which means that there will be an increased demand for community services in the next two decades. We also know that 43% of the community services workforce are at present aged over 45 years, one of the oldest profiles in industry sectors in SA, and most of these workers will leave the workforce in the coming decade, increasing the dependency ratio".

"In the face of increasing demand, attracting staff to the sector is problematic due in part to low wages, unattractive conditions and the high stress of the work. Other factors include the lack of career pathways and opportunities for advancement" said Professor Carson.

Karen Grogan, SACOSS Executive Director said, "Over the past few years we are seeing an increase in the complexity of need of those accessing health and community services. Where once people presented to services with one primary issue that required support or assistance we are now seeing people with multiple problems. This obviously places greater demand on the skills and expertise of staff in the sector."

"Quite clearly there will be retirement issues and the sector needs to build strategies to increase capacity. We need to find ways of attracting staff to ensure that we have well trained and highly skilled staff to support those in our community that are most vulnerable" says Grogan.

The report is available by contacting SACOSS Executive Director, Karen Grogan on 0418805426 or by e-mailing: shane@sacoss.org.au

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