

PRESS RELEASE
2 April 2019



Vocational education reforms critical to aged care

The New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) supports the Government's approach to reforms of the vocational education and training system.

Submissions close this week, 5 April, on the proposed reforms announced on 14 February by Education Minister Chris Hipkins.

NZACA Chief Executive Simon Wallace says reforms are vital to ensuring the aged care sector can meet the changing needs of its residents who are increasing not only in number and age, but acuity.

"We need a vocational education system that is flexible and able to respond to these changing needs. Dementia care for example is a growing area of need that requires specialist training through a system that can deliver in a timely way.

Mr Wallace says that the reforms are urgently needed at a time of critical shortages of New Zealanders wanting to work in the aged care sector, combined with historically low unemployment.

"We need a vocational system that not only focuses on training young people, but also reskilling and upskilling people throughout their work life. Employers need much greater choice in training options compared to what exists in the current system and industry associations, as the peak representative bodies for their sectors, need to have more say in the system

"Ultimately, the aged care sector is a driver of social GDP, which is consistent with the Government's own well-being focus. Whilst our association is not wedded to any specific structure for vocational education, it must serve the learner and the business employing them. And small business must not be ignored because as employers in the aged care sector they too need to be embraced in any model.

"There is a clear and urgent need for change and the Government's planned reforms are a step in the right direction."

ENDS

Contact: Simon Wallace on 04 473 3159 or 0274 882850