

New apprenticeship for people working in aged care

Joint media release from Careerforce and NZACA

“If we are looking for any positives arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, one has to be the greater recognition and appreciation of our essential workers, and the importance of attracting and upskilling the aged care workforce”. Jane Wenman, Chief Executive of Industry Training Organisation Careerforce was commenting as she announced the launch of its new Apprenticeship in Aged Care, with specialisations in dementia, palliative care, and complex conditions. “We’re excited by the launch of this new programme, and the important role it will play in supporting critical workforce upskilling”.

The aged care sector expressed the need for a more specialised programme to help cope with increasingly challenging demands from an ageing population. “We have seen how the essential aged care workforce stepped up during the lockdown. This new aged care apprenticeship programme will give these workers the opportunity to become specialist healthcare assistants providing palliative care, dementia care and supporting people with complex conditions,” says Wenman.

The New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) welcomes the new apprenticeship programme. NZACA Chief Executive, Simon Wallace says. “Workforce development is a top priority for the NZACA and its members that make up more than 90% of the 40,000 rest home beds in the sector. Healthcare assistants make up the largest proportion of the aged residential care (ARC) workforce at around 22,000 and the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the increasing importance of the role. The Aged Care Apprenticeship is a welcome initiative to both upskill our current workforce and attract more Kiwis into the sector.”

The Healthcare Assistance for Aged Care apprenticeship programme is targeted at those working with elderly people in aged residential care facilities, specialised dementia units, therapeutic programmes, community support, hospitals, primary care or hospice environments.

Wallace expects a high uptake of the programme. “The NZACA and its members have been calling for such an apprenticeship programme to ensure our sector has the workforce able to provide a consistently high quality of care. I expect this will be welcome news to our members and there will be a high uptake.”

With the Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund (TTAF), Careerforce apprenticeship programmes are currently fees free for enrolments through to December 2022. Employers may also qualify for the Government’s Apprenticeship Boost fund – designed to help employers retain and bring on new apprentices by providing them with up to a maximum of \$16,000 for each apprentice they enroll.

“In an historically underfunded industry, the TTAF and Apprenticeship Boost will be well received by employers,” says Wallace.

This level 4 complex apprenticeship programme is designed to be completed in 2 years on-the-job, and apprentices will have the support of Apprenticeship Advisors who will provide pastoral care.

“There is certainly a high level of commitment involved in any upskilling opportunity especially if you are also working. However, we are committed to supporting the aged care apprentices to have the best possible experience,” says Wenman.

The NZACA is looking forward to working together with Careerforce to benefit the aged care sector and the older New Zealanders being cared for.

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Careerforce is the Industry Training Organisation (ITO) for the health, mental health, youth work, disability, social services and cleaning sectors. Careerforce support employers across New Zealand’s health and wellbeing sectors to run workplace training programmes, allowing staff to achieve nationally recognised qualifications on and off the job. We are the Government appointed body that sets skill standards, develops and facilitates achievement of NZQA qualifications across all our sectors. For more information please see: www.careerforce.org.nz

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The New Zealand Aged Care Association is the largest and most influential association representing all parts of New Zealand’s aged residential care sector.

They represent over 90%, or approximately 40,000 beds, from New Zealand’s aged residential care sector. The services they provide include rest home, hospital, dementia and psychogeriatric care, as well as short-term care.

For media enquiries for NZACA, please contact Simon Wallace, Chief Executive at simon@nzaca.org.nz.