

A Compassionate Approach to Leadership in Aged Care

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About Catholic Healthcare



43

Residential
Homes

3,000

Residents

4,500

Home Care
Clients

13

Retirement
Villages

4,000

Dedicated
Staff

1,200

Volunteers

- 27 years of experience
- Not-for-profit
- Award winning services
- Trusted in your local community
- Exceptional resident satisfaction
- Above average CSAT/NPS scores

About the Presenter

Dr Jacqueline O'Toole is a Lecturer of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at Monash University.

- Significant aged care sector research experience, including PhD.
- Lecturer for more than 20 years.
- Research interests include Leadership, Management, Ethics and Governance.



Just imagine...

An aged care system where our elderly were treated with care, dignity and respect. Where compassion was the cornerstone on which policies, practices and interactions were made to ensure that our aged citizens were able to live their best lives in an environment of love, security and appreciation?

“At its heart, our inquiry has revealed that people receiving aged care want to be treated with care, dignity and respect. Individual needs and preferences vary, but compassionate care, dignity and respect are the building blocks of an aged care system worthy of our nation. At their simplest, care, dignity and respect are about how we would want ourselves and our loved ones to be supported as we age.”

(Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, 2021)

Introduction

The aged care sector in Australia has long been regarded as being in crisis, and a common theme that exists across the aged care industry is that there is inadequate preparation for people transitioning into management and leadership roles to meet the complex demands of this sector.

(Pagone & Briggs, 2021; Productivity Commission, 2011)

Aged Care System - Purpose

- To ensure that older people have an entitlement to high quality aged care and support and that they must receive it.
- Such care and support must be safe and timely and must assist older people to live an active, self-determined and meaningful life in a safe and caring environment that allows for dignified living in old age.
- Systemic problems begin and end with those ultimately responsible for aged care in Australia— successive Australian Governments and leaders within the aged care industry.



Did you know?

- The average wage for an Aged Care Worker is \$23.35 per hour.
- The average wage for Zookeeper is \$27.56 per hour!

Older Australians are still being denied the care they need simply because access to care is strongly rationed!

We have mandated staffing levels in childcare centres, prisons and kindergartens but not in aged care facilities.

The compliance burden can still deter and impede the ability for care staff to interact with the client and provide quality, home-like and compassionate services - this is a problem!

And...

Some approved providers' leadership and culture appear not to align with their mission and not with the purpose of the aged care system.

Aims of PhD Research

- Determine the skills competencies and abilities that are required of leaders in RACs.
- Investigate the impact of government policy on the effectiveness of the aged care industry.
- Analyse the demographic issues of an ageing Australian society and a rapidly ageing workforce within RACs.
- Identify the HRM complications currently facing RACS and examining the issues that prevail in this industry sub-sector.

- In-depth interviews were undertaken with 18 participants in senior leadership roles in residential aged care addressing the following key question:
 - *“What are the competencies, skills and attributes needed by leaders in the complex residential aged care service industry sector?”*
- Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

Participants

- Aged care facility managers
 - Single entity
 - Local Government
 - Part of large corporation
- Executive Director for an Aged Care Industry Body
- CEO Large Aged Care Corporation
- Aged Care Leadership Consultant
- HR Manager Large Aged Care Corporation
- GP – Aged Care
- Nurse Manager – Aged Care Facility, Large Regional Health Provider

Leadership Definition

“Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good.”

(Ciulla 1998)

Contingency factors impacting leadership effectiveness were confirmed.

- Very few participants identified leadership skills that were agreed upon unanimously.
- Many different skills and competencies identified for an effective leader were acknowledged, conveying the complex mix of skills required for leaders in residential aged care.

It was confirmed from all responses that the effectiveness of leaders were contingent on three things:

1. Government Policy & Regulation
2. Ageing Population & Workforce
3. HRM

Government Policy & Regulation

1. “The government offers a reactive response – instead of just slowing down and really engaging in proper dialogue and conversation about whether their reforms are appropriate and right and proper for the sustainability of an industry that is going to be essential in the coming years.
2. “At the end of the day, somebody working on the floor is earning less than somebody working at McDonalds pretty much. The government needs to recognise the work that the people are doing for probably their family members.”

(Ivan & Gary 2014)

Ageing Population & Workforce

1. We're an aging workforce; we look after older people but we also, the predominance of people that work in the aged care industry are over 48, they are female.
2. Fundamentally the way that the industry is positioned generally from a workforce perspective that's where we're going to fail. Even if they put money into buildings, even if they give us more funding, if they don't address the workforce shortage and the perception, it's not going to change.

(Ivan & Andrea 2014)

HRM Strategies & Issues

1. “Workers are least satisfied with job security, support from their team, flexibility to balance work and non-work commitments and the match between work and qualifications.”
2. “Two years is probably the average that a worker would stay because of the burnout rate – this is precipitated by long hours, complex staffing and resident issues and uncompetitive remuneration.”

(Bart & Smiley 2014)

Findings – Leadership Competencies

Leadership characteristics fit into the following three competencies:

1. Technical competencies
2. Critical thinking competencies
3. Relationship competencies

Technical Competencies

- Budgeting
- Finance
- Planning
- Marketing
- Understanding Government regulation
- Clinical skills



“It’s important that they have a good strategic head about the market going forward, their place in that market, where they’re situated, what partnerships of mergers, acquisitions, collaborations that they can enter into to ensure their survival.” (Ivan 2014)

Critical Thinking Competencies

- Managing Ambiguity
- Managing Change
- Strategic Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Innovation
- Strategic Vision



"...I think largely it's being able to create and sell a vision. And whether that's in charge of an organisation or whether it's in charge of a department or whether it's in charge of a home – being able to create the vision to be able to enthuse people." (Bart 2014)

Relationship Competencies

- Compassion
- Communication
- Guidance
- Emotional Intelligence
- People Management
- Motivation
- Conflict Management
- Teamwork



I think you need to have compassion, an attitude that the residents and their wellbeing come first above everything else, infinite patience, be mentally tough, clear thinking – and, above all else, be an excellent communicator (Ben 2014).

Leadership Characteristics

Only two leadership attributes were identified by all participants as being pivotal to successful residential aged care leaders:

1. Being able to communicate effectively, a clear vision for the future to their staff, clients and families.
2. Being able to compassionately manage the care of residents.

- The results support a commonly understood concept that communication is essential to good leadership.
- Supports the theoretical view that communication is a crucial leadership skill.



- One of the critical attributes missing in many aged care leadership approaches is compassion.
- Compassionate care is not just about removing another's pain or suffering, but is 'about entering into that person's experience so as to share their burden in solidarity with them and hence enabling them to retain their independence and dignity.

(von Dietze and Orb, 2000)

- This research also found that despite the intention of residential aged care services to provide compassionate care for older Australians, clinical 'safety' and 'efficiency' were more frequently used to measure effective care.
- This is despite the implementation of the Aged Care Quality Standards, which require aged care services to increase their focus to meet spiritual, social, emotional and physical needs in achieving high-quality care.

So, what's next?



Compassionate Recruitment

- Implementing recruitment and onboarding processes that ensure healthcare professionals develop traits that enable compassion and compassionate leadership.
- Use appropriate psychometric testing tools and employing a values-based recruitment process.
- Leaders are pivotal in shaping the culture, practices and reputation of an organisation – compassionate leadership can be an appealing organisational characteristic for attracting and recruiting skilled, compassionate staff.

Compassionate Education & Training

- Education and training in the aged care industry must incorporate the accomplishment of attributes associated with compassion, including emotional intelligence and person-centred leadership and care.
- Developing attributes such as emotional intelligence in residential aged care would assist in creating more robust and beneficial relationships with stakeholders, leading to a greater focus on person-centred compassionate care.

Compassionate Communication

- Compassionate communication is also an area for consideration and development amongst aged care leaders and managers.
- The advancement of programmes to improve the ability of leaders to communicate compassionately with their stakeholders.
- Communicating this is often regarded as the most critical component of compassion.

Compassionate Governance

- Sufficient funding levels in residential aged care be available to allow workers the time to provide high quality relationship-based care.
- Funding for aged care should not be subject to the fiscal priorities of the government of the day.
- A philosophical shift is required by government that places the people receiving care at the centre of quality and safety regulation. This means a new system where decisions are based on compassion that both empowers and respects the rights of our ageing citizens.

Conclusions

- Compassion is important in aged care leadership, as it can improve an organisation's culture and compliance.
- Implement recruitment onboarding processes that encourage healthcare professionals to apply compassionate leadership and exhibit values that support and inspire this.
- Incorporate emotional intelligence and person-centred skills into aged care training and education is a key action.
- Care providers and citizens must become a voice to government for compassionate aged care policy.

Just imagine...

If our government and those in leadership positions made decisions about aged care from a compassionate viewpoint not just a medical and financial perspective, what our aged care could be like.





Q&A