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Care and Support Economy Taskforce

Terms of Reference

Background

How the care and support economy (which commonly encompasses aged care, veterans care, disability care and early childhood) grows and develops is vital to the wellbeing of the Australian community and health of our economy.

The care and support sectors are a major and growing source of economic activity and employment, and they attract significant government expenditure. Most importantly, they provide essential services to Australians, including some of our most vulnerable community members.

We have an opportunity to build a high quality, productive and fiscally sustainable care and support economy that delivers quality care and decent jobs. To do this, we need to address emerging and long term challenges associated with the evolution of care and support services. For example;

- Service demand and jobs growth for these care sectors is being driven by changing demographics, social norms and a shift to consumer-driven care.
- Chronic labour shortages will place significant strain on the sector's ability to deliver much needed services and raises questions about how Australia can meet its current and future care needs. This situation is exacerbated because of the complex care and support economy operating environment.
- Differing regulation and policies inhibit fluidity across sectors and make it complex for service providers and workers that operate across sectors.
- Debate about 'thin markets' and appropriate stewardship, particularly in regional and rural area.
- Current data collections limit the extent to which the care economy can be examined, leaving gaps in understanding of supply and demand, skill shortage, productivity and the return on investments.

In Australia, although work to address elements of shared challenges across the care and support economy has started, there is no overarching strategy that that brings together multiple government portfolios, and spans state and territory, Commonwealth Government and private and not-for-profit providers.

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Coordinated reform across the care and support economy will help realise a unique opportunity to:

- deliver high quality essential services to some of Australia's most vulnerable people through a capable and valued workforce; and
- boost productivity and ensure that government investment in the care and support economy is effective and sustainable.

Scope

The focus of the Taskforce will be to develop a national strategy that sets a shared vision for the care and support economy in Australia, and can bring together disparate efforts to address challenges across the sectors. This may include:

- developing a common understanding of what constitutes the care and support economy
- supporting the development and retention of a responsive, capable and valued workforce
- improving outcomes and the quality of care
- ensuring the equitable and sustainable financing of the sector
- identifying opportunities to address service gaps for care and support participants, particularly in regional and remote communities and for Indigenous and CALD participants
- reviewing regulations to determine where streamlining can occur while ensuring there are adequate safe guards to protect clients
- supporting greater data sharing, monitoring and evaluation, including measurement of quality of care
- reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of government investment in the care and support economy
- driving greater functional (and operational) alignment to improve service delivery, participant engagement and reduce duplication of effort.

The Taskforce will work with relevant Commonwealth and state and territory governments departments.

The Taskforce will reflect on past reports and evaluations and other relevant evidence.

The Taskforce will also inform its work and gather data through consultation, noting that consultation on related matters has or is occurring and that records of these consultation will be used where possible.

Deliverables

The Taskforce will deliver by 30 June 2023 a national strategy for the care and support economy. The Strategy will:

- provide an overview of the workforce challenges and opportunities facing the care and support economy
- outline a vision and direction to address the challenges and harness opportunities in the care and support economy.
- propose ongoing arrangements to monitor the implementation of Government policies that affect the care and support economy.

For Budget 2023-24, the Taskforce will work with other relevant portfolios to bring forward policy proposals that seek to address these challenges, to ensure that Government investment in the care and support economy is appropriately phased and coordinated in order to best address shared challenges.

Where responses to shared challenges in the care and support economy require coordinated effort across multiple levels of Government, the Taskforce will brief the Prime Minister so that these can be raised at and addressed through National Cabinet.

Governance

The Taskforce will report to Deputy Secretary, Prime Minister and Cabinet (Social Policy).

A Deputy-Secretary level Interdepartmental Committee will act in an advisory capacity and guide the work of the Taskforce. The Committee will comprise the following representatives:

- Deputy Secretary, Prime Minister and Cabinet (Social Policy) (Co-Chair)
- Deputy Secretary, Treasury (Employment White Paper Taskforce) (Co-Chair)
- Deputy Secretary, Education (Early Childhood)
- Deputy Secretary, Employment and Workplace Relations (Employment & Workforce)
- Deputy Secretary, Employment and Workplace Relations (Skills and Training)
- Deputy Secretary, Health and Aged Care (Ageing and Aged Care)
- Deputy Secretary, Social Services (Disability and Carers)
- Deputy Secretary, Social Services (Families and Communities)
- Deputy Secretary, Veteran's Affairs (Veteran & Family Services)

- Deputy Secretary, Prime Minister and Cabinet (NDIS Review)
- Deputy Secretary, Department of Finance (Commercial and Government Services)
- Deputy CEO, Services Australia (Health and Aged Care)
- Director, Jobs and Skills Australia

Resources

The Taskforce will be led by an SES Band 2 from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and will include subject matter experts from relevant line agencies.

The Taskforce intends to work closely with all relevant agencies, including those represented within it.