INVESTING IN AUSTRALIA’S AGED CARE STAFF SKILLS BASE

The 2006-07 Budget has made a solid commitment to the most vital aspect of ageing policy care – the dedicated staff who care for Australia’s elderly.

The Minister for Ageing, Senator Santo Santoro, said the Budget contained close to $90 million in new and renewed initiatives to support aged care staff and help them build their skills.

“The people who actually do the vital work of caring for our frail elderly are the absolute heart and soul of the aged care system in Australia,” Senator Santoro said.

“They deserve the support of their Government to expand their skills and knowledge, and in this Budget they have received that support.”

• Community care workforce – additional training – $13.4 million over four years

“Demand for aged care services delivered to people in their own homes is rising with the ageing of the population and in keeping with older Australians’ preference to continue to live independently for as long as possible,” Senator Santoro said.

“This measure supports training for community aged care workers to ensure that they have the right skills to deliver quality care. Community care workers will now be able to access training opportunities similar to those already provided for residential aged care workers.

“New funding of $13.4 million over four years from 2006-07 will support training for around 2,700 direct care workers.

“Priority will be given to care workers involved in providing Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH) packages and EACH Dementia packages. The training will enable these workers to gain up to Certificate IV qualifications.

“Aged care employers will be expected to encourage and support staff to undertake training.”

• Encouraging best practice – $21.6 million over four years

The Government will back its investment in the security of residents with a $21.6 million four-year programme to identify and replicate the best aspects of clinical and personal care in aged care homes.
Improvements in care skills and practices in aged care homes will be encouraged by involving leading aged care services in research projects, together with researchers and educators, to develop and implement best practice in aged care.

“Priority will be given to research projects in key areas of care including clinical assessment, medication and wound management, infection control and falls prevention,” Senator Santoro said.

“Results of the research projects, and training materials, will be promoted widely to encourage all aged care homes and care staff to take up best practice care.”

- **Aged care nurses scholarship programme – continue funding of $36 million over four years**

Funding of $36 million over four years will be continued for up to 1,000 aged care nursing scholarships, valued at up to $10,000 a year, to encourage more people to take up aged care nursing and to improve the career pathways for nurses already working in aged care.

- **Aged care workers support – continue funding of $30 million over four years**

The Government will provide $30 million over four years to enable aged care workers in smaller aged care homes to upgrade their skills and will encourage more people to work in aged care in rural and isolated locations.

The Minister announced this measure on 20 April 2006.

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