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To whom it may concern

Re: Submission on the development of the Jobs and Skills Australia's 2024-25 Work Plan

Anglicare Australia appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the development of the Jobs and Skills Australia's 2024-25 Work Plan (the Work Plan).

The Anglicare Australia Network understands the importance of a skilled workforce. Over 25,000 staff and volunteers work with Anglicare Australia member agencies across the country in areas such as aged care, disability, early childhood education, health and community care. Anglicare Australia also regularly publishes research on employment and workforce issues, including our annual Jobs Availability Snapshot and standalone reports such as *Creating Jobs, Creating Opportunity* released in 2023.

In addition to participating in the consultation survey for the Work Plan, Anglicare Australia makes this submission to underscore why we have prioritised skills shortages and labour market forecasting as our key areas of focus. This submission also calls for better connections between the work of Jobs and Skills Australia and the employment service framework for people currently out of work, who could be better utilised to address some of Australia's pressing workforce challenges.

A nationally consistent approach for labour market forecasting

Forecasting trends and shortages in the labour market is a key area of concern for the Anglicare Australia Network. Several areas in which our agencies work are facing major workforce shortages, including aged care, which is forecast to have a shortfall of at least 110,000 direct-care workers by 2030.ⁱ Persistent workforce shortages are coinciding with broader funding challenges, leading several aged care providers to face difficult questions about their overall viability.

Long-term staffing in the disability sector is another major concern, with a recent report by the federal parliament's Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) estimating that 83,000 extra workers are needed to fill the gaps in the system.ⁱⁱ Worryingly, the report also found that one in three disability support workers are planning to leave the sector in the coming year.

These challenges can only be addressed through long-term forecasting and planning. Anglicare Australia supports prioritising this focus area in the Work Plan, but notes that it must be used to inform tangible strategies to address workforce shortages. In the longer-term, Anglicare Australia hopes to see Jobs and Skills Australia go beyond forecasting shortages to identifying their causes and solutions. For example, pay and conditions have been identified as a major contributor to workforce attrition in disability and aged care,ⁱⁱⁱ and measures to retain workers could have major implications for how these areas are funded by government.

Identifying Australia's persistent skill shortages

In addition to general workforce shortages, several of our key work areas are facing major skills shortages as roles in the care sector become more advanced. In aged care, new mandated staffing levels mean many facilities are operating significantly below full capacity because they can't get enough workers.^{iv} Smaller facilities are finding it particularly difficult to maintain workers and meet the requirements for 24/7 nurses.

More advanced skills are also now required in early childhood education and care. The shortage of qualified educators is making it increasingly difficult to deliver services to families in need, with services being forced to cap enrolments because they simply don't have enough qualified staff to meet the requirements of educators to children. These issues are not unique to the Anglicare Australia Network, with a snapshot of the sector conducted in 2023 showing that more than two thirds of centres had to cap enrolments in the sample week.^v This means that thousands of places are being cut off from parents and families each week.

Identifying sectors facing persistent skills shortages should be a key part of the next Work Plan. We hope to see Jobs and Skills Australia move beyond simply identifying the sectors facing shortages and begin working on strategies to meet them.

Linking the Work Plan to pre-employment interventions

A key area of concern for Anglicare Australia is the quality and performance of pre-employment interventions for people out of work. Anglicare Australia has conducted several studies on these interventions and people's experiences of them, finding that they do little to help people find employment. People out of work are remaining so for longer, and this cohort is largely made up of people who are only qualified for entry-level work.^{vi} This places them at a major disadvantage in a labour market that increasingly demands advanced skills and qualifications.

Most of the Work Plan's proposed work areas are centred around higher education and vocational education and training. These deeper opportunities to reskill would be far more useful to unemployed or underutilised workers than the pre-employment interventions they are currently required to participate in, such as courses on body-language, attitudes, or resume building.^{vii} The next Work Plan represents an opportunity to better utilise people seeking work in addressing workforce and skills shortages.

Anglicare Australia has attached our recent report, *Creating Jobs, Creating Opportunity* to this submission which outlines strategies to improve pre-employment interventions and create entry-level pathways for sectors where workforce demand is growing. It also showcases case studies from within the Anglicare Australia Network to show how this can be done.

The next Work Plan represents an important opportunity to address persistent issues facing Australia's workforce. As jobs become more complex and demand for workers across sectors grows, it is vital to find creative ways to address workforce and skills shortages. Anglicare Australia hopes that Jobs and Skills Australia will play an active role in finding those solutions, as well as forecasting the problems.

We would welcome the opportunity to expand on our comments. Please do not hesitate to be in touch if you would like to discuss the issues raised in greater detail.

Yours sincerely



Maiy Azize
Acting Executive Director

ⁱ Committee for Economic Development of Australia (2023) [Duty of care: Aged-care sector running on empty](#).

ⁱⁱ Commonwealth of Australia (2022) [Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme. NDIS Workforce Final Report](#).

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Op cit: Committee for Economic Development of Australia (2023).

^v Australian Childcare Alliance (2023) [Response to September 2023 ACCC 2nd Interim Report](#).

^{vi} Anglicare Australia (2023) [Creating Jobs, Creating Opportunity](#).

^{vii} Ibid.