

more interested in going out and meeting the clients, building the relationship, giving the feedback about how it is going, looking for new opportunities and getting to know their own area.

"That's what has happened – we have found that as the businesses have been established, there are unique differences. Some areas have higher needs around disability or culturally and linguistically diverse groups – cultural differences are a big thing. Some of our western Sydney areas would be much different to the east or the north. If you centralise it, how do you get to know what the people in the communities are like and what sort of care workers are going to match with the clients?"

### Private and public

Private clients currently make up 20 per cent of the business, whether it is people in a care or assisted living facility or in the home. Noakes says many families of elderly people in residential aged care pay for the extra one on one that a private carer can provide.

The bulk of the business, however, is provided through partnerships with over 150 organisations, including church-run aged care organisations, not-for-profits and NGOs, as well as rehab, respite and group homes, and insurance companies, public trustees

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and hospitals. "They purchase direct to us and we do the service provision," Noakes says.

The agency also provides some registered nurses for the EACH program and has set up a recover at home program in one office that is being rolled out to other offices. "That's all about early discharge from hospitals – it involves an RN working with a physio."

Recruiting staff is not a major issue, despite the difficulties facing other caring sectors due to low pay, she says. And employees come from all walks of life.

"We've got quite a large number of men who have worked in corporate life who have retired who then want to do something

### HELP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN AGED CARE

Efforts to move young people with a disability living in aged care facilities into more suitable accommodation have long been stymied by a lack of affordable, supportive housing. Community Housing Limited (CHL) has taken steps to address the issue with Housing NSW by announcing the construction of a group home built to house five young people with a disability under the federal government's Young People In Residential

Aged Care (YPIRAC) program. CHL will receive \$1.2m in YPIRAC funds to build the property on land purchased in Armidale, with on-going support provided by a local social support agency. "This property will be a quality-built affordable group home that offer a wonderful new living environment for these young people, who will of course be around people their own age." CHL's NSW state manager Patrick Yeung says.

meaningful," Noakes says. "They are fantastic with older men. We've got mums with kids from school who only want to work school hours, we've got registered nurses who don't want to work in the clinical area and just want to work as community carers.

"One of the good things about the workforce within community care is that you can employ someone from generation Y right through to a baby boomer. They come in with all sorts of backgrounds and qualifications. We start them with a basic skills course, which is a six-unit module that we run once they commit to employment.

"If people haven't worked in the industry and they enjoy the work, we then encourage them to start up a Certificate III in community care."

The company guides candidates through traineeships and is currently lodging an application to become a registered training organisation (RTO).

Retention strategies are not brain surgery either, she says. "If people suit the work and like the work ... it is a very stable industry once they have settled. It doesn't suit everybody – they have to be able to walk into a home, see what needs doing, cope with all of the variables that come with every situation, like someone with dementia standing at the door and saying 'no, I don't know who you are and you can't come in'. But you must look after your staff. If staff aren't looked after it doesn't matter where they work, I believe. **HA**