

## The next generation of aged care nurses

The old perception of working in aged care as boring and lacking in professional challenges couldn't be further from reality in 2015, with many student nurses finding this setting is the ideal way to gain a broad range of practical experiences that will stand them in good stead for the future.

A leading partner in educating the next generation of nursing professionals in WA, Brightwater Care Group has doubled the amount of student placements for this group in the past year to close to 400 students.

And far from the old perception of aged care as a slow-moving, stagnant place for a nursing career, recent research undertaken by the Brightwater Research Centre has indicated that while prior to their placement only 10.6 per cent of students were considering employment in aged care, following the placement this had increased to an incredible 60.2 per cent.

Brightwater CEO Dr Penny Flett said offering student placements was a crucial factor in attracting and retaining an aged care workforce, and a great way to highlight these settings as stimulating work environments that provided interesting clinical challenges every day.

"One of our aims is to challenge and positively influence any negative perceptions students might have towards the aged care and disability industries by providing positive student experiences within Brightwater's services," said Dr Flett.

"Placements at Brightwater are highly valued by students, as they are made to feel like a valuable member of the team and are exposed to a wide range of clinical experiences. We employed 28 people in the past 12 months alone directly as a result of their placement, with many others saying they would seek out Brightwater as an employer for the future."

Students from five universities, 16 VET providers and 11 high schools completed placements with the aged care and disability provider. Over 70 of these participated in an Interprofessional Education program in partnership with Curtin University, where students from seven health disciplines collaborated to learn from each other and provide high-quality care in a residential care setting.

Student placements were conducted across Brightwater's 13 residential aged care facilities, with At Home Services providing support to people in their homes around Perth, and with Brightwater's services for adults with a acquired disability, which includes the newly redeveloped \$20 million Oats Street Rehabilitation Facility for people with acquired brain injury.