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BRIDGING GENERATIONS



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Page 1 of 1



RESULTS: ECH Wellness Henley Beach client Daniel Smith with exercise physiologist Hannah Wuttke-Brown.

Youth is invigorating this sector, Cara Jenkin discovers

THE aged care workforce is getting younger, driven by allied health graduates choosing to use their skills in the growing industry.

The National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey reveals the median age of the residential direct care workforce decreased from 48 years to 46 years between 2012 and 2016, with almost half (46.1 per cent) of new hires under the age of 35.

The latest census, commissioned by the Health Department in 2016, shows the median age for those employed in the previous 12 months was 36.

The average age for new allied health staff was 33, compared to 35 for personal care attendants, 37 for enrolled nurses, and 42 for regis-

tered nurses.

While the median age of the home care and home support direct care workforce increased slightly in the same period, from 50 to 52 years, the percentage of recent hires aged under 35 (23.6) was at its highest level, with allied health staff having the youngest median age of 41.

Exercise physiologist Hannah Wuttke-Brown, 23, started her career in private practice after studying a Bachelor of Clinical Exercise Physiology at the University of South Australia.

She joined ECH Wellness Henley Beach just over a year ago, where she runs group exercise classes, conducts exercise assessments and one-on-one client consultations with people aged 55 and over.

"Many people are turned off by working in aged care, however – now I am in the industry – I think it is a very satisfying area," she says. "Ageing is a fact of life so to be able to assist people in making that transition

more manageable and positive is hugely worthwhile and immensely satisfying. I enjoy getting to know the clients and hearing all the life experiences that they have had.

"I love seeing the benefits my clients gain from regular exercise and the appreciation I receive when they reach their personal goals."

A high school teacher suggested the profession to Wuttke-Brown, who was interested by the subjects involved.

"I had not heard much about it," she says. "The further I researched exercise physiology the more I could see myself working in the profession.

"I have always enjoyed the benefits of exercise and have wanted to work in the health industry, so to combine the two seemed ideal."

6 IT IS A VERY SATISFYING AREA TO BE IN