

Background

Under the auspices of the Uniting Church and the UnitingCare brand, Resthaven is a not-for-profit service provider that offers a range of accommodation and support services for older people. More than 1000 people, with an average age of 88 years, are accommodated at ten Resthaven locations in high and low dependency residential aged care facilities or Independent Living Units.

In addition, Resthaven's Community Services assist several thousand older South Australians to maintain their independence and manage their health and well-being so that they are able to live at home. These services include in-home support, planned respite for carers and a variety of other programs to assist with day to day living. Three Therapy Services offer physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry, speech pathology, continence nursing clinics and rehabilitation.

Over 1,600 staff are supported by approximately 450 volunteers.

Industry challenges

Aged care is a big industry. It is not real estate or retirement accommodation. It is practical hands on help for older people who need assistance with daily tasks. The primary source of funds is the Australian Government, which heavily regulates the industry.

Over recent years, there has been rapid growth and demand for services, which will continue as the population ages and the available workforce shrinks. According to the Federal Minister, aged care is currently the ninth largest industry employer in Australia, and the scale of the industry is set to grow exponentially over the next decades. Recruitment of suitable staff is increasingly difficult in a tight employment market.

Whilst Resthaven has an established brand awareness, aged care as an industry does not have strong appeal as a choice of workplace. Most media reports highlight negative aspects of the industry, giving it a less than positive image.

Positive images of vocational work with older people

As part of Resthaven's Strategic Plan, a key objective is to promote a positive image of vocational work with the elderly, to challenge the negative stereotypes and highlight the positive aspects. This has led to development of a media campaign to:

- increase awareness and promote Resthaven as an 'employer of choice' that provides quality aged care for older South Australians
- develop positive images of ageing to shape community values, encourage social participation, and engender support for older people.
- build respect for older people, their right to be treated with dignity and acknowledge their valuable contribution to society and in shaping the nation.
- keep aged care on the political horizon through proactive advocacy.

The campaign

A community service announcement was released to the commercial television networks to use in unfilled spots, with a small paid component. In addition, limited radio advertising featured the same campaign message – **make the difference**. Press advertisements also featured this slogan and positive photos.