

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**4 September 2018**

**PREMIER ANDREWS BACKS VILLAWOOD CALL FOR GREATER  
CARE WORKER SUPPORT**

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has backed a Villawood Properties call for the business community to follow its lead in offering special support packages for Geelong's largest employment sector – care workers.

Villawood's Care Worker Support Program has set aside land at Geelong that's been taken up by nurses, firefighters, teachers, police, paramedic, and personal and aged care workers to date.

The program has provided land for important community workers who might otherwise have been squeezed out of the market and following its Geelong success has been extended to Melbourne.

"As Geelong's economy changes, care workers are a rapidly growing and increasingly important part of our community and our employment base. We need to look after them," Villawood executive director Rory Costelloe said.

Oliver Hume research shows Greater Geelong's health care and social assistance workers grew 40 per cent between 2011 and 2016 to make up one in six or almost 16 per cent of the local workforce.

This is the largest sector of the local employment base.

Retail workers, by comparison, make up less than one in eight at 12 per cent, while education and training, and construction, are both running at less than 10 per cent.

Villawood's care worker program was praised by Premier Daniel Andrews, who backed Villawood executive director Rory Costelloe's call for others across the broader business community to embrace our valued care workers.

"Every day, our nurses, teachers and first responders devote themselves to caring for our communities."

"And through their Care Worker Support Program, Rory and his team are dedicated to making a real difference in the lives of these hard-working Victorians."

"I congratulate Villawood Properties on this Program and commend them on their expansion efforts."

The Villawood care worker program sees 10 per cent of land on public release reserved for care workers. Lots are reserved for two months from the time of release, regardless of whether there is demand for the land by the broader public.

"Those care workers working within a 10km radius of our Villawood community also save \$10,000 on their land price," Mr Costelloe said.

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“This is to ensure they can live close to work and continue to nurture the local community.

“Everyone at Villawood has been very moved by what we’ve achieved in a very short time.

“In Geelong, a huge number of police, nurses, social workers, aged care workers, Corrections Victoria workers, SES volunteers, teachers and fire workers have all purchased with us via this Care Worker Support Program.

“We have now extended the program to our Melbourne communities.

“We’d love to see other companies jump in and replicate this care worker support initiative across broader sectors.”

Care workers buying into Villawood under the scheme have praised it emphatically.

“When you know people want to live in the community, and build their home there and be part of that community, it really makes a difference,” said Gurdeep Kaur, a driver for wheelchair-bound people.

“Villawood giving back to the community like this is a great idea.”

NDIA support co-ordinator Tim Delaney and partner Sheridan Edsall were all smiles after they bought in under the care worker program.

“We’re really happy. We just missed out in the last release about a month ago and, before that, a year ago,” said Tim, who is also studying for his master’s in occupational therapy.

Sebin Xavier and wife Merlin, and baby Ruben, qualified for the care worker offer because of Merlin’s nursing work with Barwon Health’s University Hospital.

“It’s a great thing that Villawood is doing,” said Sebin.

Villawood understands the combination of Melbourne’s surging demand for property and upward movement in land prices has made it harder for care workers to get into the market.

“The program acknowledges the crucial role these workers play in caring for our communities,” Mr Costelloe said.

“It provides a mechanism to ensure they can live close to work and live in a thriving and positive community.”

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