

Where did you go? Crunching the numbers on Lyndoch staff

Description

Foxy takes a close look at the Lyndoch financial reports to flushout what is happening with staffing numbers.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

I was lucky enough to have my Mum cared for by the fabulous staff of Lyndoch Living for 10 years before she died there in April (at the ripe old age of 94.9), but so many of the faces I used to see during those 10 years are no longer there.

Where did they all go?

One source told me between 70 and 80 people have left Lyndoch in the past couple of years.

Some retired, some retired early, some moved on to other jobs, some now work for themselves, and some, well, some allegedly left for reasons which indicate an “interesting” workplace culture and I have to tread carefully as I slowly unpick that picnic.

But I am unpicking it, piece by piece, having had dozens of people contact me over the past nine months.

Today, as part of my slow, deep dive into the changing world of Lyndoch, I have called on Foxy the Fact checker to crunch the staff numbers.

First, have 70 to 80 staff left Lyndoch in the past few years? I can't say for sure, but I have sent that figure off to Lyndoch CEO Doreen Power and board president Kerry Nelson for confirmation and will see if a response is forthcoming.

What has definitely happened, however, is the Lyndoch staff mix is changing.

Let's start at the top.



A very random photo of my Mum and I, with a lovely gent in the background, taken at Lake Lodge, Lyndoch in 2018.

The first thing Foxy found was a big jump in Lyndoch administration.

In 2016, there were 37 people in admin, in 2017 there were 41, and by last year it had grown to 59 – 19 more people than in 2016.

At the same time, the cost of “administration and other expenses” jumped by almost \$1 million in 12 months, from \$2.4m in 2017 to \$3.31 million in 2018.

While admin numbers have gone up, the number of allied health workers employed by Lyndoch has gone south. (Q: What’s an allied health worker? A: Clever people who do things like occupational therapy and physiotherapy).

In 2016 there were 28 allied health professionals on staff at Lyndoch, but last year that dropped to just 12.

Allied health has largely been – oh, I dislike this word – “outsourced” and a Melbourne-based agency called [Agestrong](#) is the boss of the “outsourced” physio and o/t workers. (Agestrong, by the way, is owned by a private company called Designacare. Good grief.)



Lyndoch CEO Doreen Power and board chair Kerry Nelson at the 2019 Warrnambool May Racing Carnival. Photo: [Lyndoch Living Facebook page](#).

What about the nursing staff, you ask? What is happening there? After all, these are the hard-working people at the very coalface of feeding, washing, dressing, nursing and cheering up the residents.

Well, using the numbers dug out from Lyndoch [financial reports](#) and Lyndoch [annual reports](#), the picture from 2016 to 2018 looks like this:

the number of registered nurses (RN, senior nurses) has flatlined, from 32 in 2016 to 30 in 2018;

the number of enrolled nurses (EN, other qualified nurses) has climbed by 13% from 90 to 102;

the number of personal care workers (PCW) shot up 34% from 109 to 147;

a lot of these staff, especially PCWs, are part-time or casuals;

overall, the number of full-time-equivalent staff took a dive from 280 to 230 between 2017 and 2018.

What does this all say to a humble fact checker like Foxy?

It says that PCWs, the lowest paid workers, are picking up a lot of the workload for what can be a very tough gig.

At the same time, it suggests that the RNs and ENs must be working their backsides off with pretty much the same numbers that they had two years' ago.

(As we speak, Fair Work Australia is nutting out a dispute between Lyndoch and the nurses' union over proposed cuts to senior nursing levels.)

To be super clear, I am not suggesting Lyndoch Living is breaking any rules.

Indeed Ms Power told the local paper in July that Lyndoch Living “aligned with the Safe Patient Care Act and nursing ratios” and was working to increase full-time-equivalent numbers.

I also know that all nursing staff work very hard to make the residents' lives comfortable and enjoyable and that this is their absolute first priority.

But what is filtering down to me from the 30-plus people I have now heard from is that Lyndoch is finding it tough to find and keep senior nursing staff, that there are often roster shortages that need to be filled at short notice, and that many people are starting to feel exhausted.

I take all this as a cry for help.

I am listening.

We, as a community, need to listen because we own and we love Lyndoch.

I have put a series of questions to Ms Power and Ms Nelson for a piece I am planning for Sunday.

See you for the next instalment then.

[The Lyndoch Living AGM is next Tuesday 29 October at 4pm at Lyndoch.]

If you would like to support the work of The Terrier, please consider throwing something in the tip jar.

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Author

carol