Middle managers in the 21ˢᵗ Century – challenges and opportunities for change in the aged care industry

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Middle managers in the 21st century

- What to expect in the next 20 minutes?

  - Brief overview of my research project
  - Myths surrounding middle management
  - Implications for policy and practice
  - Time for questions

Myths about middle management

Middle management is

- Dead
- Just a time of transition on the way to the top
- A 'natural progression' for clinicians
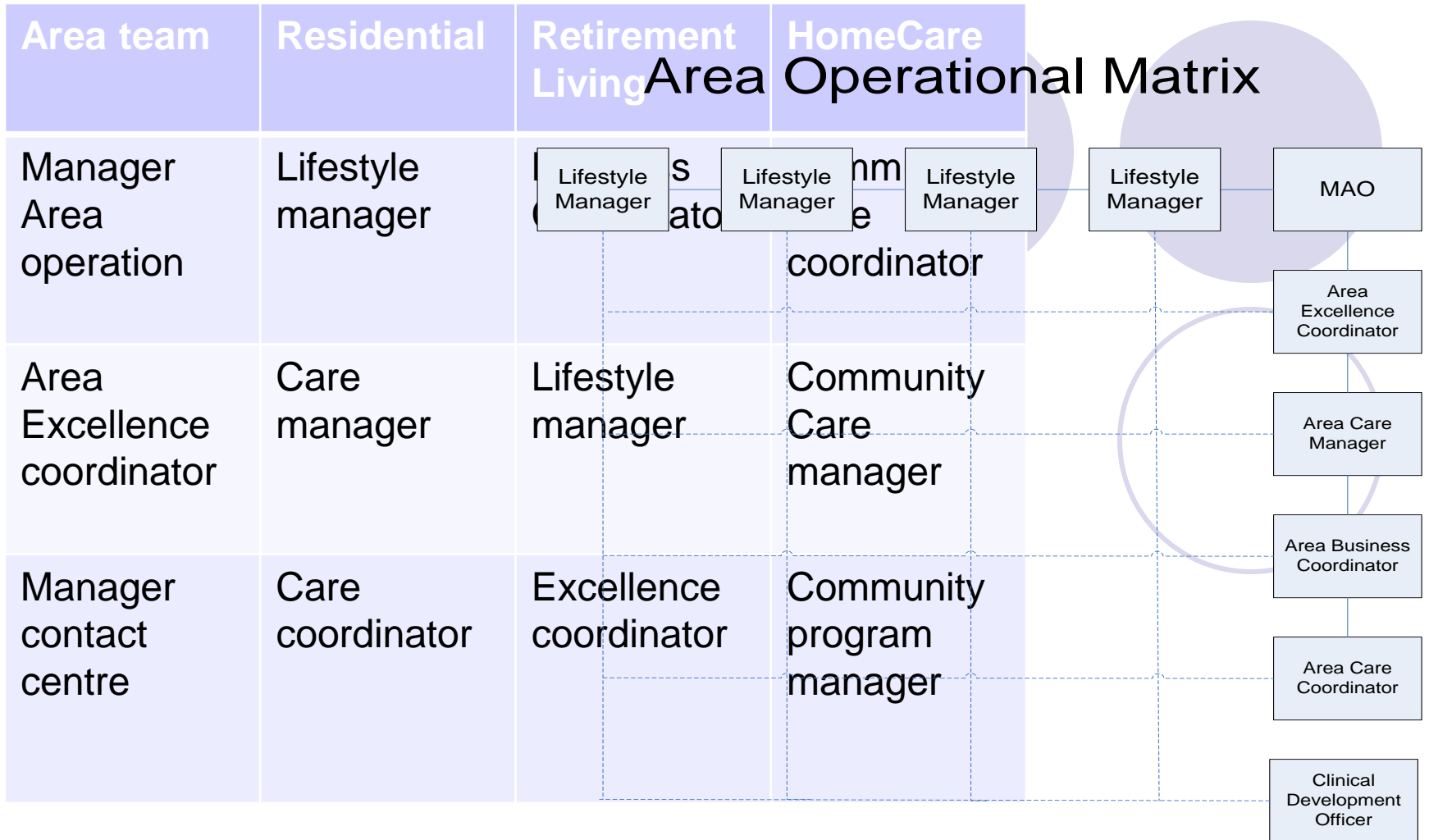- Only for clinicians within the aged care context

Middle management is dead

- Peters (1992) stated:

"Middle management, as we have known it since the railroads invented it right after the Civil War, is dead. Therefore, middle managers as we have known them, are cooked geese… Middle management…is dead… It's over, d'ya hear? Over. Over. Over "(Peters, 1992,p. 758)

- Osterman, P.(2008) & Hewison, A.(2004) – actually growing number of middle managers (especially in Health Care)

Middle management is dead

Area Operational Matrix

Area team	Residential	Retirement Living	HomeCare
Manager Area operation	Lifestyle manager	Lifestyle coordinator	Community coordinator
Area Excellence coordinator	Care manager	Lifestyle manager	Community Care manager
Manager contact centre	Care coordinator	Excellence coordinator	Community program manager

Lifestyle Manager — Lifestyle Manager — Lifestyle Manager — Lifestyle Manager — MAO

MAO — Area Excellence Coordinator — Area Care Manager — Area Business Coordinator — Area Care Coordinator

Clinical Development Officer

Middle management is just a time of transition on the way to the top

- 'Hardly the ambition of anyone' (Torrington & Weightman, 1987)
- Reasons to get into the managerial position:
  - "Want to make a difference" *(interviews)*
  - "I actually got into management because I was, having worked in various aged care facilities I really didn't like what I saw" *(interview)*
  - "It's challenging and I like a challenge" *(interview)*

Middle management is just a time of transition on the way to the top

- "And I have been quite upfront and said I will be here for 12 months, have this organisation up and running, what are the options for me after that? Because if I can't - if there's no position for me at that next level then I have to go elsewhere." *(interview)*
- Majority feels that there is nowhere to move up – can only move horizontally
- Great impact on intentions to leave

'Natural progression' for clinicians

- "I think it was a natural progression and I was probably just fortunate" *(interview)*

However:

  - Relationship & team management
  - Facilities and procurement management
  - Information management
  - Leading Excellence and Safety

  (from position description of a middle manager)

+ coaching and training staff (Balogum, 2003)

+ emotional support through transitioning (McComville & Holden, 1999)

'Natural progression' for clinicians

- Challenges
  - Performance management *(interviews)*
  - Work-life-balance *(interviews)*
  - Demands on their role (Paulsen, 2003)
- Management as a profession undervalued
  - Implications for the training and development opportunities of all middle managers
- Difficulty for non-clinical managers to be respected in their position

Within aged care only clinicians can be managers

- Nurse managers
  - "Cause unfortunately on an organisational level the only pathway we are showing for people to move into management is through the clinical pathway" *(interview)*

    vs.

- Demands for efficiency and transparency
  - "She is a nurse by profession. I said, that is the profession you practiced before but what you practice now is not a nursing profession but management profession. […] being both professionally and academically trained in management and leadership. That is different. You know that is. That is a profession itself." (interview)

Within aged care only clinicians can be managers

- Changing organisational culture
  - "I tend to say I'm a nurse. For me I'd hate ever to lose that title. So even though I don't nurse every day, when people ask me that I don't know I'll say, yes, I'm a Registered Nurse" *(interview)*

  - "Because I'm not a nurse, I'm not always accepted in this world that we work in because nurses think that it should be a nurse that has the position. That's been going on ever since I've had this type of management position." *(interview)*

What are the opportunities? Or why we should focus more on middle management

- Utilise the potential of this unique group within the organisation
  - "the entrance for the less visible organisational conditions and processes" (Svenningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1163)
  - Its middle managers are caught in the tensions between the need to change and the continuity of traditional values and systems (McConville & Holden 1999)
  - Researchers find that middle managers have knowledge not only of the organization's strategies but also its social structure, which helps facilitate change (Pappas, Flaherty, and Wooldridge 2004)
- Opportunities for professional development impact positively on intentions to leave and staff satisfaction
- Their attitude, knowledge and ability of middle managers to navigate the on-going cultural change within the industry effectively
- Good management and leadership impacts positively on staff satisfaction, turn-over, intentions to leave, productivity and care outcomes (Borrill et al., 2003a,b)

Outlook – 'Climate for change'

- A needs assessment for management programs in combination with mapping of the Australian aged care workforce

- The aged care sector's increased complexity is a significant stress factor in the workplace environment

- Development of a leadership and management quality framework

- With consideration of the diversity of aged care – community care, residential aged care, retirement living

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The End

Thank you for your attention.