ABSTRACT
The global shortage of nurses and an ageing population have together created a need to investigate why employees’ stay in, and leave, the Australian aged care sector. This study extends the literature on employee retention and turnover by examining employees’ intentions to stay in and leave the sector, using the Resource Based View of the Firm as the underlying theoretical framework. This study proposes two distinct models of why employees’ stay and leave, based on relevant literature and is believed to be the first study conducted in Australia examining both constructs within an aged care context. In particular, this study examines the influences of both personal characteristics (gender, education level and tenure) and organisational and employee behaviour constructs (job embeddedness, perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support and job satisfaction) on employees’ intentions to stay and leave, using a quantitative research design approach. This study will extend and contribute to both academic and practitioner knowledge bases and will potentially contribute to the long term sustainability of the aged care sector.

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW
Employee turnover is a complex phenomenon that is of great concern to organisations. One key talent in organisations is critical to organisation’s short and long term sustainability (Rynd, Deysher, Robinson & Moseynt, 2008). This is because employees have been found to be more productive and resistant to quit their roles, when they are not affected by role movement around them (Arnold, 2005). In addition, retention improves the quality of work outputs as employees are on average more experienced; resulting in an organization needing to spend less on induction and training to produce those outputs (Arnold, 2005). However, the key to retaining these employees is unknown, although much research has been conducted in examining this phenomenon.

Employee retention in the Australian aged care sector is particularly important as it has been projected that, by 2025, the growth in the aged population will result in a 40 per cent increase in demand for hospital beds each day, the same time as the population aged less than 30 years. In September 2005, registered nurses in the aged care sector were projected to grow by only 0.5 percent (Schofield, 2007). This is expected to compound the current shortfalls in registered nurse (RN) numbers and contribute to an ongoing skills shortage. The reduction in RN numbers and the increase in unregistered care workers in the sector over the last few years, has altered the health care milieu and affected the overall quality of care and health outcomes for clients (International Centre for Human Resources in Nursing, 2009, 2010). Given that the aged care industry provides services to an increased number of frail and vulnerable clients, developing and maintaining an adequate workforce to support and deliver these services is of central concern (Skinner, Van Dijk, Elton & Avor, 2011). To do this, research is required to investigate retention and turnover of the workforce.

This study will explore the influence that the personal factors, education level, tenure, generation, and gender, have on employees’ intentions to stay and leave, as well as the influence that organisational factors, Job Embeddedness, Job Satisfaction, Perceived Organisational Support and Perceived Supervisor Support, have on the relationship. Additionally, this study will look at the combined influences that both personal and organisational factors have on employees’ intentions to stay and leave the aged care sector. In doing so, this research aims to provide the aged care sector with a level of understanding not previously gained about what makes their workforce stay and leave. This knowledge can then be used to contribute and inform future employee retention and organisational strategies within organisations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
This research is theoretically underpinned by the “Resource Based View of the Firm,” which argues that an organisation’s competitive advantage within a market is made up of the resources that are rare, valuable, inimitable and non substitutable (Barney, 1991). One of these valuable resources is an organisation’s employees. Thus, organisations should ensure appropriate human resource policies and people management practices are implemented in order to maximise their capacity to retain key talented employees.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS
Theoretical Contribution
It is expected that this research will make significant contributions to the retention and turnover literature by examining the combined influence that personal and organisational factors examined have on both employees’ intentions to stay and leave. Examining the factors that influence employees’ intentions to stay and leave the context of aged care, which has previously been neglected by researchers. This is important as skill shortages in aged care are already an issue for the sector. This research makes another contribution through analysing both personal and organisational factors of perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, job satisfaction and job embeddedness, along with the personal factors of age, gender, marital status, kinship responsibilities, tenure and perceived health of employees and their families. In doing so, this research will be able to estimate the amount of variance that each of the identified factors contributes to employees’ intentions to stay or leave, thus making a significant contribution to the literature on retention and turnover as a whole.

Practical Contributions
It is anticipated that this study will provide Australian aged care organisations with specific guidance on characteristics that influence their employees’ intentions to stay or leave, thus contributing to the ongoing debate on strategies for retention and turnover. It is anticipated that aged care organisations can use these research findings to reflect upon and improve their retention strategies, thus they retaining productive employees and avoid the high costs of turnover.