

Community Services Industry

About the Community Services Industry

The Health Care and Social Assistance industry is the second-largest employing industry in Queensland with 10.9% of the labour market, and is the largest employing industry nationally. The industry currently has an average annual growth in employment of 5.9%. Community Services represent approximately 42% of this workforce, providing community care and social assistance services in all communities. Key sectors within Community Services include Children's Services, Aged and Community Care, Child Protection, Youth, Disability, Community Mental Health, Advocacy Services, Social Welfare, Mediation and Counselling services.

Community Services include organisations whose primary goal is to support individual or community wellbeing and to meet the needs of vulnerable and at-risk community members. In 2009 the Queensland Department of Communities funded 1,487 community service organisations an amount of \$1,129.1 million (QCOSS, 2009). Many services are also funded by Commonwealth Departments such as the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and by other state government departments such as Housing, Arts and Health. Still further services are privately or donor funded.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates the Queensland community services workforce in 2008-2009 was 102,600 workers, equivalent to 70,000 full time staff. This represents 18% of Australia's community services workers and 4.6% of the Queensland labour market. There were estimated to have been an additional 66,000 volunteers working in Community Services in June 2009 providing an average of 92.9 hours of work. This level of community engagement is extremely positive for the industry, but does present some unique workforce challenges.

Queensland's population will continue to grow more rapidly than the Australian average. Population ageing and increased longevity, with associated increases in support required will continue to dramatically increase demand for Community Services. The Australian workforce is ageing rapidly, and the community service workforce is older than the Australian average (median age 43 years compared with 39 years for all industries). Queensland population will also continue to age and will be significantly older in the northern and far north regions.

Community Services qualifications account for approximately 70% of the Health and Community Services VET delivery in Queensland, with over 92,500 participants undertaking over 20 million AHC in 2009. The Community Services Industry had the fourth-largest number of Queensland trainees in training during the period 2004-2009. A number of community services occupations are recognised skill shortages in Queensland, including Child Care Workers, Aged and Disabled Carers, and Social Workers.

Workforce Implications

The Community Services Industry continues to have difficulty attracting sufficient skills and labour and experiences a high turnover of staff, with a significant proportion of staff exiting the sector every year. Increased service demand along with skill and labour shortages create increased workload and worker stress. Employers have limited resources available to invest in training and workforce development, and often don't have the funds and/or available staff to backfill positions while workers are in training. The large number of small and not-for-profit enterprises in the Community Services Industry have limited capacity for strategic workforce planning, and the management and leadership capacity across the industry requires further development.



Other key workforce implications include:

- Increased management, rostering and coordination loads. Increased workloads and stress at all levels.
- Increased instability of workforce, with casuals needing to work for more than one employer thereby complicating their availability with both employers.
- Reduced resources available for workforce development, replacement and growth.
- Increased competition for labour and skills.
- Role redesign and engagement models required to attract and retain a changing volunteer profile.
- Limited availability of workforce to deliver care which is aligned to a culturally diverse population
- New service models emerging involving multi-disciplinary teams, integrated service and advanced practitioners.
- Organisations and workforces require new skills and role redesign to new service models.
- Requirement for higher level skills for workers in Community Services, in particular disability, mental health, housing and homelessness and new skills for professionals in the health system.
- Poor reputation of VET and VET qualifications in some sectors.



Key Actions

There have been two significant developments in relation to community services workforce in the last twelve months — the Queensland Compact Workforce Initiative and the Fair Work Australia Equity Case.

Queensland Compact Workforce Initiative

The Queensland Compact is a sector-wide, whole-of-government and whole-of-state policy, advancing better service delivery and planning, underpinned by better engagement between government and the not-for-profit Community Services sector. The Compact was launched in November 2008 in response to the Queensland Auditor-General's Parliamentary report 2007 and the Service Delivery and Performance Commission Report 2007.

Under Goal 3 of the Compact (*Improve the sector's capacity and sustainability*) the Queensland Government and the not-for-profit Community Services sector commits to working together on strategies to develop a sustainable human service workforce. Item 3.1.1 of the Compact Action Plan 2008 – 2010 includes a commitment to *“Support the development of a sustainable human services workforce focusing on attracting, retaining and training a high-quality workforce by:*

(a) Analysing initiatives underway across government and the sector to promote workforce development and encourage and support volunteering

(b) Identifying accurate and consistent workforce data

(c) Committing to strategies to address priority workforce and volunteering issues.”

The Workforce Council is a member of the Compact Governance Committee and is one of the sponsors of the Workforce Initiative responding to the Item 3.1.1 above. The Workforce Council is working with the Department of Communities to undertake this action and develop recommendations for future findings. To date the following actions have been undertaken:

- A data collection to map existing state and national initiatives which support workforce development and volunteering has been undertaken. A searchable database of existing initiatives will be hosted on 'Community Door'. The prototype is currently being tested at <http://www.communitydoor.org.au/wdi>
- Statewide consultations — from August to October 2010, the Compact Secretariat, in partnership with the Workforce Council and the Community Services Skilling Plan (CSSP) undertook statewide consultations with sector and government stakeholders. These forums have assisted in identifying priority workforce needs and possible local, regional and statewide solutions

The papers developed from the consultations were tabled at the recent Compact Governance Committee. It is anticipated that outcomes of this initiative will align closely with the priorities of the Skills Alliance.

Fair Work Australia Equity Case

On 11 March 2010 the Australian Municipal, Administrative, Clerical and Services Union (ASU), the Health Services Union, the Australian Workers' Union of Employees, Queensland, the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union and the Australian Education Union lodged an application for an Equal Remuneration order. The case is to be dealt with by a Full Bench of Fair Work Australia¹.

Submissions have been provided to Fair Work Australia by Unions, employer bodies, governments and others.

¹ <http://www.fwa.gov.au/index.cfm?pagename=remuneration&page=introduction>

The Full Bench undertook a series of site visits across Australia, including two sites in Queensland, to better inform themselves of the following:

- Skills, knowledge and responsibilities involved in each program area.
- Qualifications desired and utilised in the workforce.
- Conditions under which the work is performed.
- Changes in the performance of work over recent years (e.g. new reporting requirements, new legislation, changing client needs).
- Recruitment and retention issues.

Witnesses are expected to be called in the New Year and a decision is anticipated in the first half of 2011.

The National Equity Case follows the successful case brought by the Australian Services Union (ASU) QLD which resulted in the Queensland Community Services and Crisis Assistance Award – State 2008. This new Queensland Award has seen considerable increases in wages across the community sector, however not all organisations are signatories to this award and not all organisations are paying to this award.

Other Key Actions

Other key actions recommended in relation to skilling and workforce development in the Community Services Industry include:

- Support local clusters of employers, education and training providers, and industry and community stakeholders to support local workforce planning and collaboration, with priority on 'boom communities' such as Surat and Bowen Basins.
- Increased support for school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, VET in schools and other pathways initiatives aimed at attracting school leavers into community services occupations.
- Policy response required to mitigate the impact of regional and rural labour draw within 'boom' communities.

- Support regional ecosystems responses to workforce attraction and retention.
- Public awareness and strategic communication of industry careers and workforce achievements.
- Employee recognition and reward strategies.
- Collate and distribute data and information about the size, diversity and significance of the Community Services workforce.
- Support VET partnership brokerage roles to assist employers and training providers to align VET products and services with industry pathways.
- Provide support for employers to enable successful school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Wider promotion of the funding and support available through apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Establish information forums with relevant training programs to promote and assist uptake of traineeships and apprenticeships in industry.
- Wider promotion of the VET system and its role in supporting career pathways and skill development for community services workers' Workforce Investment Strategies.
- Build workforce planning and development expertise and capacity within industry to support bottom-up and top-down workforce innovation.
- Improve industry cost modelling capacity.
- Development and promotion of cross sector-industry career paths.
- Improve business planning and partnership development skills across industry.
- Establish workplace age management programs.
- Funding models need to accommodate casual workers.
- Investigate funding models that support backfill and/or recognise backfill costs as contribution to the cost of training.
- Support to redesign volunteer management models and practices
- Define and implement tailored career pathway projects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds focusing on professional, management and leadership positions.

- Develop career pathway programs to engage skilled and unskilled migrants, Indigenous Australians and youth populations.
- Support local and sector-level clusters of employers and education and training providers to facilitate workforce planning and role design, and develop location-specific career and industry promotion strategies.
- Professional development and system support in the areas of partnering and collaboration.
- Improve business management and leadership capacity in relation to workforce planning, change management and human resource management.
- Implement opportunities to share staff and skills across boundaries, develop new models learning from approaches in other settings.
- Development of programs to support e-learning capacity, including access to resources and development of e-learning champions.
- Investigate funding models that support travel and accommodation costs for regional and remote workers and/or recognise these costs as contribution to the cost of training, for example the Rural Non-government Organisations Workforce Access to Education and Training Initiative.
- Support for audit and registration body to understand and implement industry competency and currency requirements for the Community Services Industry.
- Skilling Solutions Queensland to review criteria for Preferred Supplier status in order to ensure quality RPL delivery.
- VET assessors to access training in RPL.
- Ensure pre-vocational training is responsive to local employer needs, and employers understand competency outcomes.
- Celebrate and publicise good practice examples and assist in the wider adoption of these practices within RTOs and Industry, e.g. the Vocational Education and Training Practitioners and Workforce Advisors Network (VETPWAN).
- Strategic industry audits of Children's Services RTOs in relation to the *Early Years Learning Framework* and Mental Health RTOs in relation to Recovery practice.
- Improve understanding of VET and industry's role in influencing the training system and the training they purchase.
- Development of partnership broker roles to support industry partnerships with VET in key occupations and sectors in clusters.
- Skill development for RTOs to tailor training programs to employer needs and then map to competency units to achieve training package outcomes.
- Skilling funding to recognise the increased support and development that new entrants require
- Greater use of skill sets to augment current qualifications.