

Youth



About the Youth Sector

Youth services provide support and/or advocacy for young people. This can include planning for youth wellbeing, early intervention and prevention services for at-risk young people and youth support coordination services. Youth Work qualifications are the fifth-largest qualification area in Community Services VET delivery in Queensland, accounting for 3,771 participants and 863,177 AHC in 2009.

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ), the sector peak, has been very active at a state level in focusing on workforce planning and workforce development issues. In February 2010 YANQ produced a report, *The Youth Sector in Queensland*, outlining the findings of the Youth Sector Workforce Skilling and Training Project and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Sector Skilling and Training Project. This report provides baseline workforce data and discusses key workforce themes that emerged, and recommendations that can be used to inform skill and workforce development.

The Youth Sector in Queensland found that:

- 50% of youth workers intend to leave their current position within 12 months.
- 51% of youth workers have been in youth sector for two years or less.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth workers enter the sector at an older age and remain in youth work for longer than non Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Only 10% of youth sector workforce is Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or from a culturally or linguistically diverse background

Workforce Implications

Key workforce implications for the Youth sector include:

- Difficulty recruiting and high turnover of staff.
- Loss of skills and experience.
- Lack of career pathways, particularly in small organisations.
- No consistent definition of Youth sector and youth work practice.
- Time and cost are the most significant barriers to training and skill development.
- Certificate IV in Youth Work does not adequately cover the range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth work.

Key Actions

YANQ continues to focus attention on workforce planning and development for the youth sector. YANQ are currently liaising with the Department of Education and Training, the Health and Community Services Workforce Council and others to progress the outcomes of *The Youth Sector in Queensland* findings.

The Community Services Skilling Plan has a focus on the Youth sector, and the Health and Community Services Workforce Council supports youth sector workforce through the Integrated Workforce Development Strategy.

The Queensland Compact Governance Committee — a collaboration between the Queensland Government and the not-for-profit human services sector — has been conducting a statewide workforce initiative during 2010 and will identify strategic responses in their meeting at the end of November 2010. The lead sponsors of this project have been the Department of Communities and the Health and Community Services Workforce Council. It is anticipated that the outcomes from the initiative will align with Skills Alliance priorities. Youth services are a key part of the target for this initiative.

The importance of vocational placements in preparing students for work in the youth sector was identified as a major workforce development strategy, however the lack of resourcing of training providers to provide this function and support students and services effectively to enhance learning during the placement process was noted as a major issue and barrier in relation to placements³.

Other key actions recommended in relation to skilling and workforce development in the youth sector include:

- Create a 'career map' that shows entry points and qualifications, opportunities to cross sectors and career pathways to promote the Youth sector.
- Explore school pathways into youth work.
- Define youth work and its core skills, values, competencies and practice frameworks and promote within the Youth sector and broader community sector.
- Strategies to increase/protect resources available for workforce development and workforce viability.
- Develop tools to assist organisations to conduct audits and analysis of their cultural competence including strategies and processes they use to increase Indigenous participation.

- Improve access to professional development in regional, rural and remote areas.
- Explore new career pathways including senior worker/practitioner positions.
- Provide the sector with access to an ethics training program to provide individual skilling and build capacity to contribute to the development/articulation of values based youth work practice and recruitment framework.
- Investigate the similarities between youth work values and those embedded in the way Indigenous services work in their own communities to increase learning opportunities and ways to better connect the two parts of the sector.
- Conduct a skills audit and gap analysis of the current sector in relation to youth work core competencies.
- Identify and invest in emergent roles in the Youth sector, such as senior practitioner role.
- Increased Information Technology skills and infrastructure relevant to youth work.
- Leadership and management training and skills development for current and future managers.
- Establish a training and development plan specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Increase understanding of traineeship options to facilitate access to the Commonwealth apprenticeship incentive for backfill costs.
- 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.
- Pilot resourcing of vocational placements within the VET sector to improve learning experience of new workforce entrants.

³ YANQ (2010) *The Youth Sector in Queensland*, p 56.