



disability | ACT

department of
disability, housing
& community services

community partners

The Disability Workforce

Research undertaken collaboratively between ACT Health and Disability ACT, initiated through work being carried out by the Disability ACT Workforce Reform Working Group.

2004



ACT Government

Foreword

The publication of this Report represents fulfilment of a commitment made by the Government in the second progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Inquiry into Disability Services 2001 (Gallop Report).

The Government agreed that the Workforce Reform Working Group would be responsible for developing a strategy to address workforce issues across the sector.

The information in this Report will contribute to the development of this strategy, incorporating actions aimed at building a highly skilled, committed and respected workforce that works in a way that reflects the Vision — “*All people with disabilities achieve what they want to achieve, live how they choose to live and are valued as full and equal members of the ACT community*” — and increasingly attracts and retains a quality workforce.

In September 2004 the ACT Government launched *Future Directions: A Framework for the ACT 2004-2008*. Strategic Direction 4 provides a framework within which Disability ACT will work with its partners to provide people with disabilities, their families and carers, support services that are viable and sustainable.

This is to be achieved through objectives including, planning for the long term, equitable access, eligibility and funding, flexible service options, a stable, well-trained workforce, and working within a quality framework.

I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution made by the following people.

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Introduction

The paid workforce is a critical part of providing services to people with disabilities. To gain a better understanding of the workforce a survey was undertaken asking organisations providing services to people with a disability to provide information about their staff. This is a report of the survey and examines the characteristics and working patterns of the ACT disability workforce. The analysis will provide a benchmark for future research as well as contribute valuable information for planning purposes as the demands on the workforce change over time.

The Workforce Reform Working Group, a group comprising community and government representatives sponsored the survey. All organisations in the ACT identified as providing targeted services to people with a disability were in scope for the survey. Of the 67 organisations that were requested to participate, 46 responded—a rate of 69%.

The survey asked for information about the paid workforce only—approximately 1,700 workers in the survey—and does not consider the substantial contribution families, unpaid carers and volunteers make to the services and support provided to people with a disability and their families.

The key findings of the survey were that there were large proportions of non-permanent staff, females and part time workers in the disability workforce. Many of these people worked outside 'standard' hours and carried out shifts of varying lengths. The results were particularly influenced by the characteristics and working patterns of disability support workers, who made up 78% of the disability workforce.

Future changes to the population, the disability sector and the workforce

The 2001 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2002) showed 237,000 people employed in community service occupations in Australia, an increase of 27% since the 1996 census. The disability sector had the highest increase with a rise of 58% in the number of workers (AIHW 2003a).

With a high proportion of the workforce in community service occupations, the increase in this sector is particularly important for the ACT. In 2001 the rate of persons working in community service occupations was 1,694 per 100,000, higher than all other States and Territories. Ten per cent of these people worked in the disability sector and another 17% provided services to the aged, including age related disabled care (AIHW 2003).

Population growth, changes to the age structure of the population, greater emphasis on care within a community environment rather than in an institutional setting and the increasing number of women in the workforce are all factors expected to affect the future demand for community services and impact on the workforce of this sector.

In the ACT, the population is expected to rise to 389,000 by 2032 (ACT CMD 2003), an increase of 65,000 from the estimated resident population of 324,000 in 2004 (ABS 2004). Given the ACT prevalence rate of disability in the 2003 Disability Ageing and Carers Survey of 14.2%, this equates to a potential increase of over 9,000 people requiring disability support services (ABS 2003a).

Another factor that will influence the demand for disability support services is an ageing population, because the risk of disability is greater in older age groups (AIHW 2002). In the ACT it is estimated that by 2014 the proportion of people aged 65 years and over will be 14% of the total ACT population. This compares with the present rate of 9% (ACT CMD 2004).

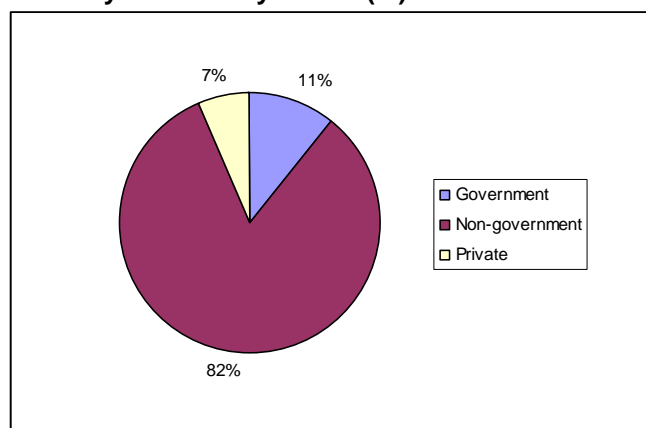
In addition to changes in the demand for disability services, the workforce providing these services is changing. The shift to part time employment has been partly a result of the increase in women in the labour force who are more likely than men to work part time. This is particularly pertinent for health and community services occupations where the proportion of all females working in those occupations was 79% in 2001.

As more women enter the paid workforce a dual effect on community services occurs, the demand for services increases and the pool of unpaid labour providing services to children, disabled or older family members reduces. On the other hand, the relatively large number of workers moving into retirement over the next few years may augment the number of volunteers providing such services (AIHW 2003a).

ACT organisations providing disability services

The majority of the 46 organisations that responded to the workforce survey were non-government organisations (NGOs) (82%), another 11% were government organisations and 7% were privately run organisations (Figure 1).

Figure 1: ACT organisations providing targeted disability services by sector (%)



Funding was from a number of sources with some agencies obtaining their funds from more than one source. One half of the organisations had one funding source only, 24% had two sources and the remaining 26% indicated they had three or more funding sources.

The majority of organisations received funding from Disability ACT with 25 (54%) of the 46 organisations acquiring some of their funding from this source. Twenty organisations (44%) received funding from the Home and Community Care Program (HACC) and 13 (28%) received funds from a Commonwealth Government program.

Funding source was related to the type of organisation and services provided. Disability ACT and the HACC program provided funding across types, while the Commonwealth Government provided funding to NGOs only.

A range of services were delivered in supporting people with a disability and most agencies provided numerous different services. The most frequently provided services were service coordination, case management and brokerage (35%) and information and referral (35%). Community access in the form of learning and life skills development was provided by 33% of agencies, accommodation support in 24% and advocacy in 22%.

Characteristics of disability workers

The 2001 Census showed that community service industries employed 13,372 (8%) of the ACT working population (ABS 2002). Employees in this industry occupied a wide range of occupations, with the most numerous broad occupations being health professionals (32%) and service workers (21%). Others included managers and administrators, associate professionals and clerical workers, many of whom support the delivery of services rather than directly provide them.

In the disability workforce survey, organisations providing services to people with a disability indicated that the majority (78%) of staff were employed as support workers, directly delivering services. Eight per cent were professional workers, 6% coordinators, 5% administrative workers and 3% were managers (Table 1).

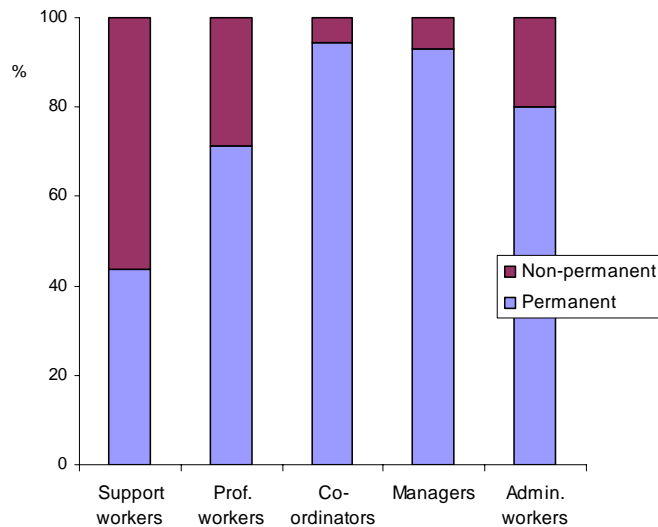
Table 1: ACT disability workforce by occupation

| Occupation | Number employed | Per cent employed |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Managers | 57 | 3.3% |
| Professional workers | 136 | 7.8% |
| Coordinators | 107 | 6.2% |
| Administration workers | 87 | 5.0% |
| Support workers | 1353 | 77.8% |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1740</i> | <i>100.00</i> |

A large proportion of these employees did not have a permanent employment status. Forty percent were casually employed and another 8% were employed under temporary or contractual arrangements. This meant that just over half of the disability workforce were permanent employees.

Casual employment was more prevalent amongst support workers with 49% of staff in casual positions and 8% temporarily employed, making the majority in non-permanent positions (Figure 2).

Figure 2: ACT disability workforce; occupation by employment arrangement (%)

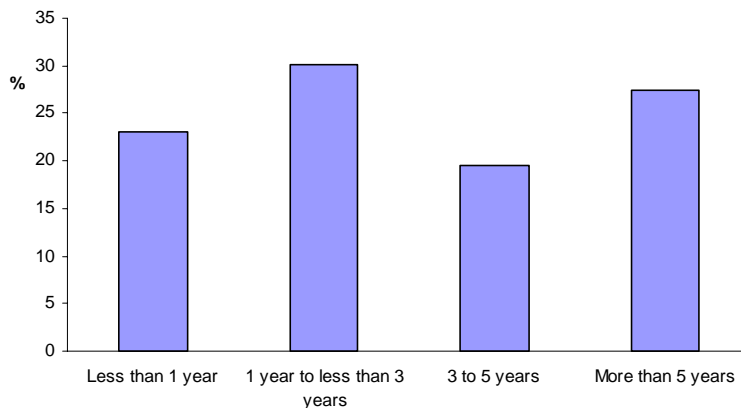


Permanent employment was most common for management and coordinator positions where 93% and 94% respectively, of staff were permanently employed.

These figures are a reflection of employment arrangements nationally which show that the proportion of casual workers was highest in elementary clerical, sales and service worker occupations—52%—and lowest amongst the professional and managerial occupations—15% and 16% respectively (ABS 1999). Temporary staff filled many permanent positions in the disability sector. Overall, organisations estimated that there were 248 vacant permanent positions and 198 people were employed on a casual or locum basis to fill these.

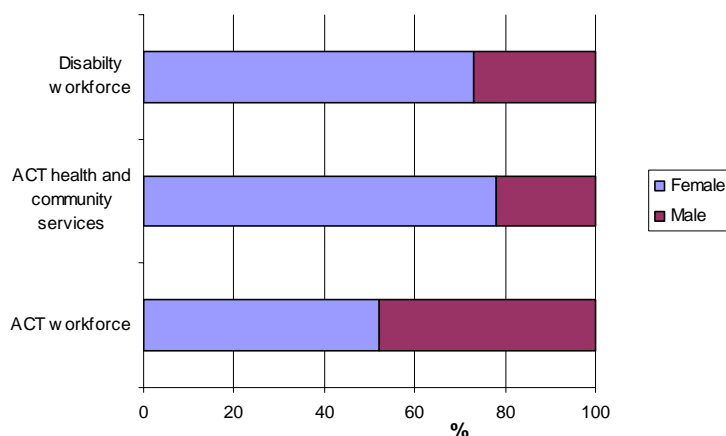
Many people in the disability workforce had been employed in the sector for a substantial amount of time. Twenty-seven per cent of the workforce had more than 5 years of service and another 20% had 3 to 5 years (Figure 3). Twenty-three per cent of employees had been employed for less than one year.

Figure 3: ACT disability workforce; years of service (%)



In 2001, employed people in the ACT were made up of 52% male and 48% female workers (ABS 2003b). This breakdown however was not reflected in the health and community services industry, where there were a much greater proportion of female workers—78%. The disability workforce survey showed that 73% of employees were women (475 men and 1251 women) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Sex of workforce; ACT workforce, ACT health and community services and the ACT disability workforce (%)



The workforce survey showed that almost half (47%) of workers in the disability sector were aged from 25 to less than 45 years. Another 39% were aged from 45 to less than 65 years. These results were fairly consistent with the ACT workforce overall, where in 2001, 49% were aged 25 to 44 years and 32% were 45 to 64 years (Table 2).

Table 2: Age of workforce; ACT workforce and disability workforce (%)

| Age (years) | Workers | |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| | ACT workforce | Disability workforce |
| 15 to 24 | 18.1 | 13.5 |
| 25 to 44 | 48.7 | 46.5 |
| 45 to 64 | 32.1 | 39.0 |
| More than 65 | 1.1 | 1.0 |
| <i>Total number</i> | <i>169,759</i> | <i>1,735</i> |

Patterns of work of disability workers

Health and community services occupations in the ACT showed a greater propensity than other sectors to part time work (ABS 2002). In comparison with health and community services occupations, the disability workforce survey showed that a disproportionately large number of the disability workforce worked part time. Seventy-two per cent worked hours that could be deemed part time—35 hours or less per week on average. Twenty-seven per cent worked approximately 35 to 40 hours and just over 1% worked greater than an average of 40 hours per week.

Regarding when people worked, the disability workforce survey showed that only 25% of the disability workforce worked during standard 'business hours'. Forty-seven per cent worked 'between 6am and 10pm' and almost one third worked for an organisation providing 24-hour 7 day a week care. Organisations indicated that less than 1% of the workforce worked at weekends. Although many employees worked during non-standard hours, almost half (49%) worked from 5 to 8 hours in each shift. Another 36% worked for 5 hours or less at a time and 16% worked in excess of 8 hours at a time.

Across the ACT, 34% of men and 14% of women in health and community services occupations worked in excess of 40 hours a week. The workforce survey showed that workers in organisations providing support to people with a disability rarely worked in excess of 40 hours. One per cent of this workforce worked more than an average of 40 hours in the week.

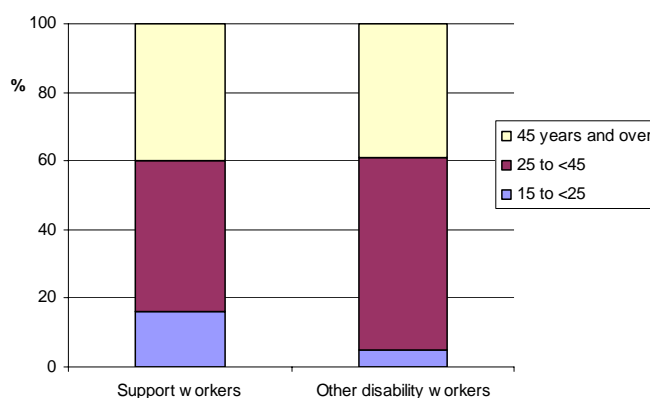
Disability support workers

Disability support workers made up 78% of the workers at organisations providing services to people with a disability. These employees differed from other workers in relation to their employment type, the hours they worked and on a number of demographic factors¹.

In particular, support workers were more likely to be male and more likely to be less than 25 years old than were other disability workers, such as managers, co-ordinators, administrative staff and professional disability workers.

Almost 30% of support workers were male, compared to 20% of other workers in the disability sector. Although there was little difference in the proportion of workers in older age categories, there was a significant difference between disability support workers and other disability workers in the younger age group. Sixteen per cent were less than 25 years old compared with 5% of other employees (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Age of ACT disability workforce by support workers and other disability workers (%)



Overall, disability support workers had spent less time on average in their position than the workers in other disability professions. One quarter of support workers had worked in their position for less than a year compared to 16 % of other disability workers. Disability support

¹ Chi-square tests showed that the differences discussed in the results of this section were statistically significant.

workers were less likely to have spent more than 3 years in their employment. Nineteen per cent compared to 22% of other disability workers and 25% compared to 37% of others were employed 3 to 5 and more than 5 years respectively (Table 3).

Table 3: ACT Disability workforce; years of service by profession (%)

| Years | Support workers | Other disability workers |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Less than 12 months | 25.0 | 16.2 |
| 1 to less than 3 | 31.8 | 24.2 |
| 3 to 5 | 18.7 | 22.4 |
| More than 5 | 24.5 | 37.3 |
| <i>Total number</i> | <i>1346</i> | <i>389</i> |

Support workers were more likely to be in non-permanent employment, with 49% working on a casual basis compared to 10% of managers, coordinators, administrative workers and professional workers.

The majority of support workers (79%) worked up to 35 hours per week on average, with 38% of these working 15 hours or less. In comparison, 46% of other types of workers in disability worked up to 35 hours per week and the majority (52%) worked somewhere between 36 and 40 hours on average (Table 4).

Table 4: ACT Disability workforce; total paid hours per week by profession (%)

| Hours per week | Support workers | Other disability workers |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 0–15 | 30.1 | 19.7 |
| 16–35 | 48.8 | 26.7 |
| 36–40 | 20.0 | 51.8 |
| More than 40 | 1.1 | 1.8 |
| <i>Total number</i> | <i>1348</i> | <i>390</i> |

Disability support workers were more likely to work shorter shifts than other disability workers. Many support workers worked shifts between 5 and 8 hours—45%. However, shifts with a shorter than 5-hour length were common and 43% worked 5 hours or less at a time. This working pattern was not seen in other disability workers where only 9% worked for 5 hours or less at a time with most (57%) working more than 5 hours at a time.

Support workers were more likely to undertake their work during non-standard hours in comparison with other disability workers. In fact, few worked during 'business hours' (9%) while 78% of the other working groups worked these hours.

Summary

The results of the disability workforce survey showed that the disability workforce displayed both similarities and differences to the workforce as a whole in relation to the characteristic of workers and their work patterns. Similarly to the workforce as a whole, there was a large proportion of non-permanent staff, especially amongst workers in less senior positions. While the proportion of women in the disability workforce was similar to the health and community services sector, these figures were much higher than for the workforce in general.

Many people working in the disability sector worked outside 'standard' hours and for shifts with varying lengths. The large proportion of the disability workforce that worked part time meant that it was unusual for workers to work excessive hours over the course of a working week.

These results were influenced by the characteristics and working patterns of disability support workers in particular, these workers made up 78% of the disability workforce.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics); 2004; Australian Demographic Statistics, Cat. No. 3101.0

ABS; 2003a; Disability, Ageing and Carers, Cat. No. 4430.0

ABS; 2003b; Working Population Profile, Cat. No. 2006.0

ABS; 2002; Basic Community Profile, Cat. No. 2001.0

ABS; 1999; Special Article: Casual Employment, Cat. No. 6203.0

ACT CMD; 2004; Population Projections for Canberra Suburbs and Districts, 2004 to 2014

ACT CMD (ACT Chief Ministers Department); 2003; Australian Capital Territory Population Projections 2002–2032 and Beyond

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare); 2003; Australia's Welfare 2003

AIHW; 2002; Disability and Ageing: Australian Population Patterns and Implications

Summary tables

Summary table 1: ACT disability organisations providing targeted disability services by sector

| Sector | Number |
|----------------|-----------|
| Government | 5 |
| Non-government | 38 |
| Private | 3 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>46</i> |

Summary table 2: ACT disability organisations, funding sources

| Service | Number |
|--|--------|
| ACT Health – Aged Care Program | 3 |
| ACT Health – Mental Health Program | 4 |
| Brokerage | 9 |
| Commonwealth Government program | 13 |
| Department of Education, Youth and Family Services | 7 |
| Disability ACT | 25 |
| Home and Community Care Program | 20 |
| Other | 11 |

Summary table 3: ACT disability organisations, services provided

| Service | Number |
|--|--------|
| Accommodation support | 11 |
| Advocacy | 10 |
| Centre-based care | 6 |
| Community access—learning and life skills development | 15 |
| Education support | 8 |
| Employment (open and supported) | 5 |
| Information and referral, including information in alternative formats | 16 |
| Recreation/holiday programs | 5 |
| Respite (centre-based) | 8 |
| Respite (in-home/flexible/host family/peer support/other) | 6 |
| Service coordination, case management, or brokerage | 16 |
| Therapy support including behaviour management, counselling and early intervention | 5 |
| Other | 10 |

Summary table 4: ACT disability workforce, employment arrangement by occupation

| Employment arrangement | Support workers | Professional workers | Coordinators | Managers | Administration workers | Total |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------|
| Permanent | 592 | 97 | 101 | 53 | 69 | 912 |
| Temporary or contract | 104 | 14 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 132 |
| Casual | 657 | 25 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 695 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1353</i> | <i>136</i> | <i>107</i> | <i>57</i> | <i>86</i> | <i>1739</i> |

Summary table 5: ACT disability workforce, years of service by occupation

| Years of service | Support workers | Professional workers | Coordinators | Managers | Administration workers | Total |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------|
| Less than 12 months | 336 | 18 | 16 | 8 | 21 | 399 |
| 1 year to less than 3 years | 428 | 29 | 28 | 11 | 26 | 522 |
| 3 years to 5 years | 252 | 38 | 25 | 12 | 12 | 339 |
| More than 5 years | 330 | 50 | 41 | 27 | 27 | 475 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1346</i> | <i>135</i> | <i>110</i> | <i>58</i> | <i>86</i> | <i>1735</i> |

Summary table 6: ACT disability workforce, sex by occupation

| Sex | Support workers | Professional workers | Coordinators | Managers | Administration workers | Total |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------|
| Female | 946 | 116 | 82 | 39 | 69 | 1251 |
| Male | 399 | 19 | 26 | 18 | 14 | 475 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1345</i> | <i>135</i> | <i>108</i> | <i>57</i> | <i>83</i> | <i>1726</i> |

Summary table 7: ACT disability workforce, age by occupation

| Age | Support workers | Professional workers | Coordinators | Managers | Administration workers | Total |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------|
| 15 to less than 25 years | 216 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 235 |
| 25 to less than 45 years | 592 | 88 | 54 | 24 | 49 | 807 |
| 45 to less than 65 years | 530 | 42 | 50 | 32 | 22 | 676 |
| 65 years and over | 11 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 17 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1349</i> | <i>135</i> | <i>109</i> | <i>58</i> | <i>84</i> | <i>1735</i> |

Summary table 8: ACT disability workforce, shift length by occupation

| Shift length | Support workers | Professional workers | Coordinators | Managers | Administration workers | Total |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------|
| 3 hours or less | 255 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 268 |
| More than 3 or 5 hours | 275 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 291 |
| More than 5 to 8 hours | 555 | 59 | 66 | 37 | 52 | 769 |
| More than 8 hours | 158 | 63 | 11 | 7 | 7 | 246 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1243</i> | <i>135</i> | <i>84</i> | <i>46</i> | <i>66</i> | <i>1574</i> |

Summary table 9: ACT disability workforce, usual working pattern by occupation

| Usual working pattern | Support workers | Professional workers | Coordinators | Managers | Administration workers | Total |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------|
| Business hours | 121 | 88 | 99 | 48 | 77 | 433 |
| Between 6am and 10pm | 743 | 41 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 810 |
| Shift work 24 hours/day | 482 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 502 |
| Weekends only | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1347</i> | <i>136</i> | <i>115</i> | <i>59</i> | <i>89</i> | <i>1746</i> |