

# **Workforce Directions 2010-2014**

A workforce strategy for the  
ACT Disability Sector

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### **1. Our Purpose**

Workforce Directions 2010-2014 aims to position the ACT Disability Sector well into the future by ensuring we develop and sustain a skilled, valued and committed workforce. It provides a broad framework for the sector to help secure the right people, in the right place at the right time. Workforce Directions 2010-2014 does not aim to replicate previous research regarding the workforce challenges facing the disability sector, but rather aims to capture the central issues raised by previous research to guide future decision making.

To help ensure achievement of the Strategic Priorities outlined in Workforce Directions 2010-2014, an annual action plan will be developed (Appendix 1). The ACT Disability Workforce Working Group (WWG) will oversee Workforce Directions 2010-2014 and implementation of the annual action plans. The WWG will report to the ACT Disability Services Forum on a quarterly basis regarding progress.

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### 2. Our Workforce

Our workforce comprises a wide variety of roles, including direct-support workers, allied health professionals, administrative and policy staff, and managers. There are disparate sources of data available regarding the disability workforce in the ACT and this is an issue that requires attention. For the purposes of this strategy the ACT Disability Sector includes any organisation operating in the ACT, whose purpose includes delivery of dedicated services to people with a disability, regardless of their source of funding.

#### Statistical snapshot of our workforce

Data regarding the disability workforce are incomplete, and improving this is a key challenge at the national level. In the ACT the Disability ACT Workforce Working Group undertook a review of the ACT disability workforce in 2004 which highlighted several areas of interest. The data below has been drawn from this report and other sources. It

- Government v non-government staff (ACT)
  - o 11% government
  - o 82% non-government
  - o 7% private organisations
  
- Age profile
  - o The Australian disability workforce is, on average, older than the general workforce within Australia. More than 50% of government employed staff across Australia are aged between 40 and 50 years (National Disability Administrators, 2005)
  - o ACT age breakdown
    - 15-24      13.5%
    - 25-44      46.5%
    - 45-64      39.0%
    - 65+        1.0%

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- Gender balance (ACT)
  - o 73% female
  - o 27% male
  
- Employment status (ACT)
  - o All staff
    - Permanent 52%
    - Temporary / Contract 8%
    - Casual 40%
  - o Support Workers
    - Permanent 44%
    - Temporary / Contract 7%
    - Casual 49%
  
- Time in sector
  - o Less than 12 months 23%
  - o 1 to 3 years 30%
  - o 3 to 5 years 20%
  - o 5 years plus 27%

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### 3. Our Policy Context

Workforce Directions 2010-2014 has been developed within the context of a range of recent and current initiatives, at both the national and ACT level.

#### **Disability specific**

##### National

- National Disability Services (NDS) National Workforce Project (2009)
- National Disability Agreement (NDA) / KPMG Workforce Capacity Report (2006)
- Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (CSHISC) Environmental Scan (2009)
- Commonwealth Disability Workforce Capacity Steering Committee / CSHISC Report "A Review of the Existing Skills Framework for the Disability Workforce" (2010)
- Review of the National Standards for Disability Services and the National Quality Framework for Disability Services in Australia (2010)

##### ACT

- Future Directions 2009-2014 (specifically Actions 38, 39 & 40)
- NDS ACT "Strengthening the Sector" Report (2010)
- Disability Workforce Strategy for the ACT Disability Sector (2007)
- The Disability Workforce (2004)

#### **General workforce initiatives**

##### National

- Community & Disability Services Ministers Advisory Council (CDSMAC) - Workforce Profiling Project Working Group
- Award Modernisation / Fair Work Act 2009
- The Pay Equity Case
- Portable Long Service Leave

##### ACT

- ACT Industrial Relations Review (2010)
- ACTCOSS "Finding Solutions: Towards the Long Term Viability of the ACT Community Sector" – Issues Paper 3 – Workforce Development (2008)

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### 4. Our Challenges

Our sector faces a range of short and long term challenges, impacting on both the demand for and supply of appropriate staff. These include

- Demand drivers
  - a. Demographics
    - i. Ageing clients
    - ii. Increased life expectancy of clients
    - iii. Ageing natural supports
  - b. Socio-cultural
    - i. Reduced number of carers and absent extended family
    - ii. Increases in social isolation
    - iii. General reduction in volunteer base
    - iv. Increasing consumer expectation of service quality, accessibility and responsiveness
  - c. Economic
    - i. Funding pressures and priorities
    - ii. Demand for service outstripping funded supply
    - iii. Productivity and effectiveness of workforce
    - iv. Individualised market based funding
    - v. Unit pricing
  - d. Legislation / policy / service quality
    - i. Disability Services Act 2000
    - ii. Future Directions 2010-2014
    - iii. Need for different mix of staff skills and knowledge
    - iv. Individualised planning and support
    - v. Community inclusion
    - vi. Matching profiles of client and worker
    - vii. Service provision in home and community
  - e. Technology
    - i. New technology to assist people with disability

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- Supply drivers
  - a. Demographics
    - i. Ageing workforce – particularly in human services
    - ii. Slowing of labour supply due to reduce population growth and increase retirements
  - b. Socio-cultural
    - i. Greater desire of work life balance
    - ii. Changing expectations of work among young people
    - iii. Low status of caring and disability work
  - c. Economic
    - i. Low unemployment and strong economy
    - ii. Market forces including wages and conditions impacting on competition for staff
  - d. Policy / service quality
    - i. Workforce strategies of other sectors
    - ii. Training availability and incentives such as traineeships
  - e. Work design and practices
    - i. Isolation
    - ii. Lack of adequate career paths
    - iii. Casualisation including short shifts
    - iv. Job insecurity
    - v. HR practice and organisational culture

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### 5. Our Strengths

The disability sector has a number of strengths which can be exploited to address the demand and supply challenges identified in the previous section. Some of these strengths can also be viewed as challenges and consequently areas which to be addressed by this strategy.

- Diverse and flexible working hours
- No mandatory qualifications required for most positions (also a risk)
- Diverse work locations
- Small geographic area
- Centre of federal government
- Relative affluence of Canberra
- Education levels in Canberra
- Autonomy

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### 6. Our Achievements

It is important to recognise the significant work undertaken up to this point. The ACT Disability Workforce Working Group oversaw implementation of the previous Workforce Strategy for the ACT Disability Sector (2007-2010). Achievements against that strategy included:

- First workforce community forum held in April, the first in an expected series of events. The second event occurred on 29 October 2008. Purpose of forums is to share information and seek endorsement of proposed and completed work.
- Disability Support Worker profile provided to [www.communityactivecareers.com](http://www.communityactivecareers.com), a web-based information resource for young people, employers and parents).
- A newspaper article placed in the Canberra Times, as part of the Canberra Careers Market week, highlighting disability support work as a career choice. Stall also at the careers market and the CIT open day earlier this year.
- Vocational Student work experience placements occurring in Disability ACT. Further opportunities in the disability field to be encouraged.
- Development of a resource package for disability sector employers called "Employment Access and Assistance Guide". Launched at forum in October.
- Certificate IV in Disability Work program continuing (Initiative in its fourth year whereby DACT fund 5 places to the non government sector to complete the Cert IV qualification).
- Working Group reps attended the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Forum(s) to advocate for the allocation of funded training places for disability qualifications under the new Productivity Places Program (part of 'Skilling Australia)
- Working Group representative actively participated in the CHCO2 review (nationally accredited community services training package review including all disability qualifications)
- The ACT Disability Professionals Learning Network organised regular professional development events for support workers on a range of topics included behaviour support, self-care and wellbeing, mental health, sexuality and working with families.
- Annual Disability Support Workers Awards commenced in October 2008. Successful evening with three individual and one team award winners, over 80 people attend the event. Second event held in October 2009.
- Research project examining retention strategies and succession planning. This is investigatory, seeking information from of our mature (over 50yrs) DSO workforce regarding retention and capturing/sharing corporate and client knowledge. This work is also being undertaken in regard to technical and specialised positions within DACT. Once the reliability and validity of the project is established, may be conducted broader across the ACT.
- Investigation into workforce data collection system(s) undertaken, including "Rimfire".

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### 7. Our Strategic Priorities

1. Strategic approach to workforce development
  - i. Sector wide commitment
  - ii. Securing and utilising relevant and timely workforce data
  - iii. Alignment with broader sector sustainability initiatives
  - iv. Carrying lessons from the past into the future
  - v. Leveraging off existing initiatives and resources
2. Attraction and recruitment
  - i. Marketing
  - ii. Remuneration packages
  - iii. Selection procedures
  - iv. Identifying and utilising attraction drivers specific to the sector and ACT
  - v. Addressing attraction and recruitment barriers
  - vi. Job design
  - vii. Employment of people with disability
3. Retention
  - i. Remuneration packages
  - ii. Job design
  - iii. Flexibility
  - iv. Career pathways
  - v. Incentives
  - vi. Learning and development opportunities
4. Learning and development
  - i. Identifying future skill, knowledge and value requirements
  - ii. Developing a learning culture
  - iii. Orientation systems
  - iv. Ongoing to access and support for professional development
  - v. Online learning
  - vi. Coaching, mentoring and peer support
  - vii. Interagency collaboration

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### 5. Performance improvement

- i. Identifying and articulating clear expectations for performance
- ii. Supporting managers to manage
- iii. Reward and recognition
- iv. Ensuring accountability

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### **8. Our Next Steps**

- Action plan 2010-11 (appendix 1)
- Monitoring progress

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### Appendix 1 – Action Plan 2010-2011

| Strategic Priorities                           | Action   | Who  | When              |
|--|--|--|-------------------|
| 1. Strategic approach to workforce development | Deliver a workshop for managers on how to develop an organisational workforce plan   | Keryl Neville (LEAD)                         | 30 November 2010  |
|  | Undertake a sector workforce survey, replicating the work of “The Disability Workforce 2004” report.   | David Addison (Disability ACT) to coordinate | 31 October        |
| 2. Attraction and recruitment                  | Meet with ACT Department of Education to identify the best ways to link in with College Career Counsellors, including the develop of sector wide promotional materials | ACT Disability Workforce Working Group       | By 31 August 2010 |
|  | Develop a “how to” kit for sector agencies regarding establishing high school and college work experience placements in their organisation                             | ACT Disability Workforce Working Group       | 30 November 2010  |
| 3. Retention                                   | Workshop for managers on how to use NDS Recruitment and Retention Toolkit  | David Addison (Disability ACT)               | 30 September 2010 |
|  | Examine feasibility of an interagency secondment scheme – government and non-government  | TBA  | 31 March 2011     |

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|                             |   |   |                  |
|-----------------------------|---|---|------------------|
| 4. Learning and development | Conduct sector wide (TNA) training needs analysis – with the aim of making it a biennial exercise   | TBA   | 31 March 2011    |
|                             | Develop and promote an event plan in conjunction with the ACT Disability Professionals Learning Network   | David Addison (Disability ACT) and Justyn McDonald (Sharing Places) | 30 November 2010 |
|                             | Increase promotion of the Joan Berry Scholarship  | ACT Disability Workforce Working Group                              |                  |
| 5. Performance improvement  | Workshop for supervisors / managers regarding managing performance of direct support staff, with one of the aims including the development of a “how to” guide. | ACT Disability Workforce Working Group                              | 31 March 2001    |