

HealthWorkforce
AUSTRALIA

Mental health peer workforce project

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Centre of Excellence in Peer Support Conference

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An Australian Government Initiative

Aiming to build a sustainable health workforce for Australia



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HWA's key objectives

- **Building capacity** to deliver fit-for-purpose health professionals, more quickly and efficiently
- **Boosting productivity** of the workforce and maximising their use
- **Improving distribution** to ensure the health workforce are placed in areas and specialties where they are needed

Delivering HWA's key objectives

- **Building the evidence** for health workforce reform through planning, research and evaluation
- **Providing leadership** to influence national policy and programs on health workforce innovation and reform
- **Working in collaboration** with stakeholders to drive reforms and support a sustainable health workforce

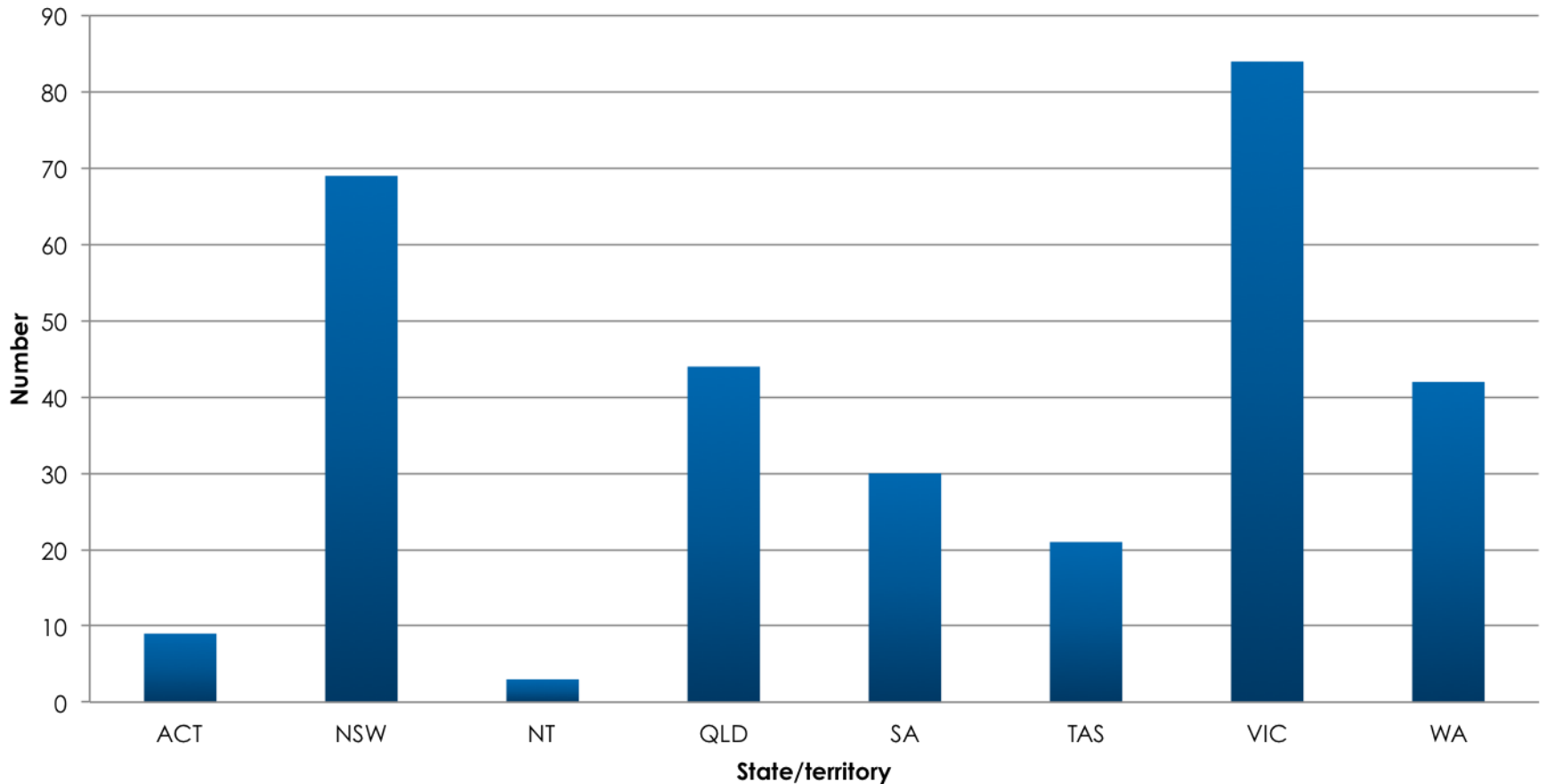
Mental health workforce program

- Mental health peer workforce project
- National mental health core capabilities project
- Mental health workforce study

Mental health peer workforce project

- Site selection
- Site visits and telephone interviews
- Online survey
- Literature review

Information gathering



Online survey responses

Peer worker - definition

People who are employed in roles that require them to identify as being, or having been, a mental health consumer or carer.

Lived experience of mental illness is an essential criterion of job descriptions, although job titles and related tasks vary.

Peer workers

- Employer in services across the lifespan
- Literature and data are limited, but both suggest that the peer workforce is small, growing and could be more widely used
- Wide range of titles in use, for example:
 - Peer support workers (54%)
 - Consumer consultant (19%)
 - Peer educator (18%)
 - Family/ carer consultant

Online survey results

- 305 responses from peer workers
- 77% were female
- Majority aged 40 or more
- 51% in NGO sector; 17% public hospitals
- 53% part-time and 29% full-time, 18% casual
- 91% reported qualifications from certificate III to postgraduate qualifications in mental health
- 22% held the certificate IV in mental health

Most rewarding thing about peer work



Benefits of peer work

People with mental illness

- Lower admission rates and longer community tenure
- Empowerment and hope
- Social inclusion
- Reduced stigma

Peer workers

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Acceptance
- Skills and employment

Families and carers

- Empowerment
- Improved relationships
- Social support

Mental health services and systems

- Engagement of consumers
- Organisational culture
- Cost effectiveness
- Responding to crisis and reducing coercive practices

Domain 1 – recommendations

Establish a national mental health peer workforce development framework guidelines inclusive of:

- Agreed definitions
- Key roles and functions
- Guiding principles and code of ethics
- National competencies and standards (including cultural awareness) and principles for employment
- Training, support and monitoring
- Workplace engagement strategies
- Resources

Domain 2 - recommendations

- Promote the national rollout of the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work including the implementation of the national training resources
- Support the development and implementation of recognition of prior learning tools that recognise existing peer worker training and experience
- Build awareness of traineeships and scholarships to support entry into the mental health peer workforce
- Develop national guidelines for the effective mentoring, coaching and supervision of the mental health peer workforce

Domain 2 - recommendations

- Describe the career pathway options into and beyond mental health peer workforce
- Develop training resources for mental health and health practitioners

Domain 3 - recommendations

- Expand use of peer workforce within the mental health service system, supported by appropriate structures including training for both peer and non-peer staff.

Domain 3 - recommendations

- Build awareness, understanding and respect for the role of peer workers by:
 - Embedding and promoting respect for and an understanding of the peer workforce in vocational and tertiary education
 - Professional development for mental health, health and community health practitioners
 - Identifying and supporting the development of peer worker leadership

Domain 3 - recommendations

- Support the development of opportunities for peer workers to network, including:
 - Developing a national mental health peer workforce online forum
 - Provide opportunities for showcasing examples of best practice and innovative approaches
 - Provide opportunities for sharing and disseminating resources, information and research

Domain 4 - recommendations

- Develop a national approach to data collection on the mental health peer workforce to begin establishing a consistent national data set across employment sectors
- Support Australian research to build the evidence base for practice and increase understanding of the contribution of peer workers

Domain 5 - recommendations

- Support access to existing interdisciplinary practice platforms to enhance collaboration and understanding between mental health peer workers and other health and mental health professions
- Undertake a policy forum facilitated by the National Mental Health Commission and supported by state mental health commissions

Next steps

- Consideration of the study by the HWA Board (November 2013)



Health Workforce Australia 2013 conference

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18 – 20 November 2013

Adelaide Convention Centre, Adelaide, South Australia



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