

Workforce Strategy: Improving supports for people with a disability 2008 – 2013 and beyond



Overview

A full version of the strategy can be downloaded:
http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/improving_supports/industryplan

Purpose

The purpose of this *Workforce Strategy: Improving supports for people with a disability* is to position the industry well into the future by ensuring that the industry develops and maintains a skilled workforce.

The disability industry's workforce comprises a wide variety of roles, including direct-support workers (the largest component), allied health professionals and people in supervisory, management and leadership roles. This strategy takes into account the changing nature and complexity of roles across the industry.

Policy context

Growing Victoria Together and *A Fairer Victoria* focus on stronger and more inclusive Victorian communities. The *Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012* and the *Disability Act 2006* are part of the policy framework for a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach, which enables people with a disability to more actively participate in their communities.

In 2006, the Department of Human Services (the department) released *Partnering for the Future: The Victorian Industry Development Plan for the Provision of Support for People with a Disability*. This plan is integral to realising the objectives of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012.

The industry plan identified five areas for priority attention:

- Creating individualised support responses
- Workforce planning and development
- Increasing community awareness and valuing diversity

- Community strengthening through partnerships
- Industry governance, management, planning and investment.

Governance arrangements to oversee the plan comprise two parallel and complementary advisory groups – a Consumer Advisory Group comprised of people with a disability and an Industry Advisory Group. Workforce planning and development are a key priority for each group.

A working group was established to inform the development, implementation and monitoring of this workforce strategic plan for the disability industry. Representatives include relevant departmental staff and key stakeholders, such as National Disability Services, training organisations, unions and service providers.

The working group held a workshop on 5 June 2008. A draft strategy was released for consultation between 8 August 2008 and 5 September 2008. The final document takes in consultation feedback.

Other policy developments

Other policy developments include:

- Quality Framework for Disability Services in Victoria (2007)
- Victorian Government Action Plan on Strengthening Community Organisations
- Federal Government social inclusion agenda
- Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council's Community Services Training Package Review
- Work pursued through the National Disability Agreement

This strategy is linked to a future national approach and aims to position the workforce beyond 2013 to support the personal outcomes and lifestyle aspirations of people with a disability.

Context - our challenges

Competition for skills and the ageing of Australia's workforce present a significant and well known challenge for all Australian industries. This includes the disability industry. Over the past 20 years the Australian workforce has been ageing at a faster rate than the general population.¹ This is a concern particularly in the health and community-services sector where workers are among the oldest in Australia.

In the disability sector, the workforce is ageing (40 per cent of the non-government sector is over 45 years of age) and predominately female (75 per cent).² While the value of older workers is significant in providing experience and knowledge, the ageing profile of the workforce indicates that high turnover will occur within a relatively short period. A review of the Victorian disability workforce shows that the workforce is employed across government and non-government services, employs more than 11,000 staff and has less ethnic diversity than the community as a whole. Much of the work is part time or casual. One third to half of the workers possess TAFE qualifications while around a fifth of the workforce possess no training qualifications.³

Therefore, action to expand labour supply is necessary to avert a detrimental impact on the availability and quality of future services for people with a disability.

¹ Department of Parliamentary Services - Parliament of Australia, *Australia's Aging Workforce*, Research note, 7 March 2005.

² Lime Management Group, *A Regional Approach to Enhancing the Disability Workforce*, Southern Metropolitan Region, March 2006, p. 3.

³ Disability In-Service Training Support Service, *Strategic Development Project 2007 - Disability Workforce Learning and Development - A Literature Review*, 2007, p. 4.

About the Workforce Strategy: Improving supports for people with a disability

This *Workforce Strategy: Improving supports for people with a disability* provides an opportunity to position the industry well into the future. The current workforce comprises people who are dedicated in their work with people with a disability and this strategy acknowledges their value and contribution.

Workforce planning and development is recognised as a central issue for all industries, particularly due to the ageing population, intense competition for skilled workers and shrinking labour market. Within the disability sector this is overlaid with new policy directions guiding change in the way support is provided for people with a disability.

The disability industry can be strengthened by ensuring that it builds and maintains a workforce that has a broader range of skills, greater resilience and a stronger community focus.

A workforce planning and development working group was established to inform the development, implementation and monitoring of this workforce strategic plan. Representatives on this working group include relevant staff from the Department of Human Services and key stakeholders, including National Disability Services, training

organisations, unions and service providers.

The working group identified four priority areas:

- Priority 1: Strategic approach to workforce improvement
- Priority 2: Attracting workforce
- Priority 3: Enhancing job satisfaction
- Priority 4: Learning, development and support.

Under each priority area, actions have been identified to enhance the capacity of the workforce and assist people with a disability to support their lifestyle aspirations.

By 2013, this workforce strategy aims for:

- people with a disability to have the support that enables them to participate in the community and to play an important role in influencing and strengthening the workforce
- a skilled workforce of managers and workers with the 'right values'* and with structured and well developed career paths
- evolving service providers that deliver and support quality services and value and support all staff in their changing roles and work environments
- a flexible and dynamic service-delivery system, which provides tailored

support to enable people with a disability to experience the outcomes valued by all Victorians.

This *Workforce Strategy: Improving supports for people with a disability* aims to position the workforce beyond 2013 with the intention of being able to support the personal outcomes and lifestyle aspirations of people with a disability.

This strategy has been developed for five years (2008-2013), but it is expected to extend to 2020. The strategy will be constantly revised over its lifespan to take into account new initiatives.

The success of this strategy is expected to become evident over time.

** Note for the purpose of this document the 'right values' refers to values consistent with the Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012 and the Disability Act 2006. The right values include: commitment, a passion for the job, open mindedness, ability to be adaptable, respectful and ability to foster community inclusion.*



Workforce Strategy: Improving supports for people with a disability

This strategy establishes a framework for building the capacity and capability of the disability workforce now and into the future. It describes the outcomes the industry is seeking

to achieve and provides clear priorities, objectives, actions and projects to progressively achieve them over the next five years.

The strategy is directly linked to the priorities of *Partnering for the Future: The Victorian Industry Development Plan for the provision of support for people with a disability*.

Vision



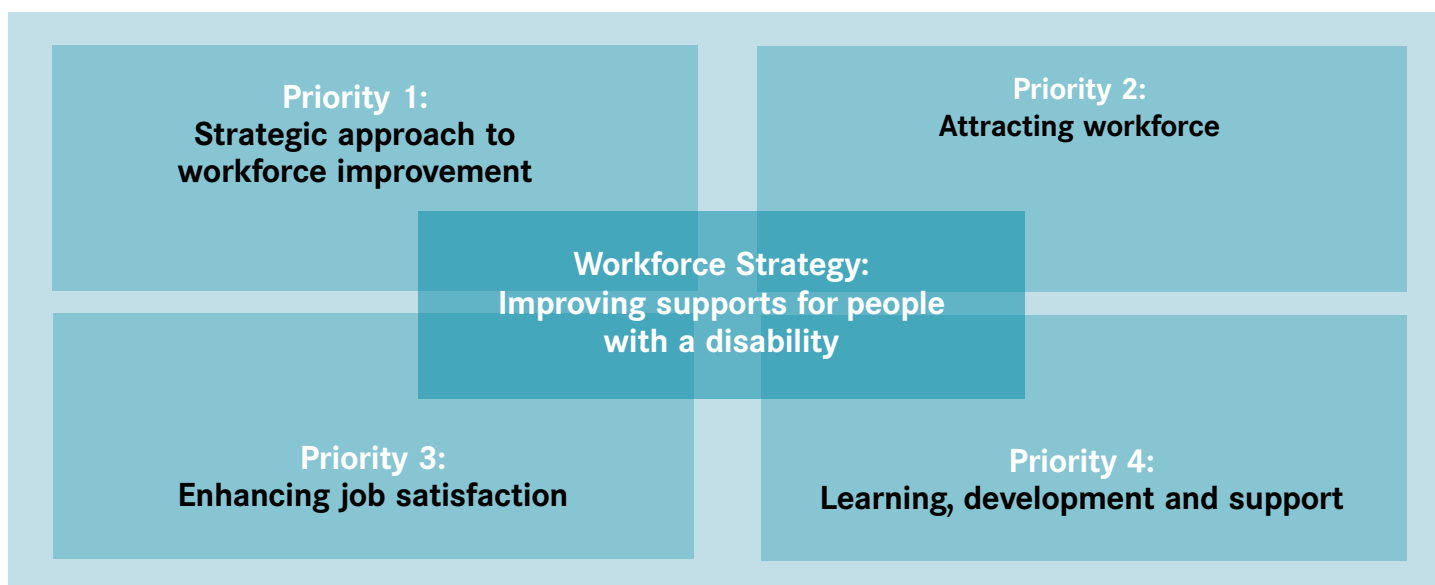
Success indicators and outcomes

- Enhanced forecasting of labour-market trends informed by contemporary practices in the workforce and establishment of performance benchmarks.
 - The industry (providing support for people with a disability) is identified as offering attractive and meaningful employment opportunities.
 - Organisational structures and processes continue to adapt to the changing needs of people with a disability and the workforce.
 - Evidence of staff continuing to build on their skills to undertake their required roles.
- The development of a workforce database (identified in priority 1) will inform trends overtime that will demonstrate the following: increase in workforce flexibility, demonstration of continuous improvement, reduction in the number of casual staff, increase in the supply, quality and availability of staff and increased attraction and retention rates.

Priority actions

Priority 1 Strategic approach to workforce improvement	Priority 2 Attracting workforce	Priority 3 Enhancing job satisfaction	Priority 4 Learning, development and support
Objectives			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the strategic approach at both industry and individual organisational level. • Establish a robust, sound evidence base to inform this strategic approach on an ongoing basis. • Identify the types of skills and supports required to sustain the future workforce. • Develop approaches that manage the tension between market competition and collaboration within the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the profile of the disability services workforce to the wider community. • Strengthen attraction and recruitment practices of organisations and employers to attract workers that possess the right values. • Develop strategies to accurately and realistically inform workforce entrants or potential entrants to the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote practices that customise and optimise work arrangements for staff and support the unique relationships between direct support workers and the person with a disability that they work with. • Develop clear roles, responsibilities, skills and knowledge across the disability workforce to inform job design and creation of career pathways. • Engage the workforce in a way that addresses cross organisational training, collaboration and cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the value of learning, development and support at all levels, including management, supervisor and direct support workers, to embed learning in practice. • Develop diverse approaches to learning and development, including coaching, mentoring, peer support and collaborative learning opportunities involving people with a disability. • Develop a process for working collaboratively on projected skill requirements with training organisations, people with a disability, support workers and the wider sector to meet learning needs.
Actions			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Use existing information to inform short-term planning. 1.2 Develop a database to identify and collect workforce data. 1.3 Gap analysis: evaluate the difference between current and future workforce requirements in skills and competencies. 1.4 Ideas bank: collect and disseminate information on best practices and trends. 1.5 Train agencies to raise awareness about workforce issues and planning. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Analyse barriers to workforce participation and innovation opportunities. 2.2 Establish a professional marketing program. 2.3 Promote recruitment of people with a disability to work in the industry. 2.4 Cadetship / work placement / scholarship programs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Promote flexible work arrangements and variety. 3.2 Use technology for effective workforce management. 3.3 Staff/support bank and disability industry group training and employment organisation model. 3.4 Improve resources and reduce the compliance burden. 3.5 Extend established knowledge network arrangements. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Identify and build on the capacity of managers. 4.2 Improve knowledge sharing and collaboration. 4.3 Encourage research and training. 4.4 Develop tools to assist people with a disability and their workers. 4.5 Encourage diverse approaches to learning and development including coaching, mentoring and peer support. 4.6 Ensure reward and recognition. 4.7 Ensure orientation and induction.

Four key priority areas were identified



Moving forward...

The implementation phase of the *Workforce Strategy: Improving supports for people with a disability* begins in 2008-09, with the development of a plan detailing actions and responsibilities within the key priority areas.

A number of actions have been identified as 'high priority'.

Project activity has been linked to the key priority areas and will build the industry's capacity to compete for labour and support its workers. The Department of Human Services will work with people with a disability, support workers, unions, training

organisations, service providers, peak bodies and other government agencies to bring about change.

This strategy has been developed for five years, but it is expected to extend to 2020. Over this time the strategy will be constantly revised to take into account the changing environment.

This strategy aims to address workforce issues state-wide. In some instances, local place-based strategies will be implemented to build upon the skills of the disability workforce to support the personal outcomes and life-style aspirations of people with a disability.

For further information

For further information please contact the Industry Development Team:

Industry Development Team
Disability Services Division
Department of Human Services

Telephone: 1300 366 731
(9.00am - 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

TTY: 03 9096 0133 (for people who are deaf or have a hearing, speech or communication impairment)

Email: industryplan@dhs.vic.gov.au

Published by the Victorian Department of Human Services, Melbourne, Victoria

© Copyright State of Victoria 2009

This publication is copyright, no part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

This document may also be downloaded from the Department of Human Services web site at: www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Authorised by the State Government of Victoria, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

April 2009

Printed on sustainable paper by Print Dynamics, 25 Lionel Rd. Mount Waverley