



South West Queensland Inter-agency Allied Health Workforce Strategy – Scoping Project

Project Report: Attachment 2 – Policy Brief

Background

A project in south west Queensland has scoped a strategy for inter-agency, inter-sectoral, collaborative allied health workforce development and sustainability. Similar to work undertaken in north west Queensland, the Allied Health Rural Generalist (AHRG) Pathway was examined in south west Queensland as a potential core component of the collaborative workforce strategy. Health service providers, the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) and Primary Healthcare Network (PHN) contributed to the project, which was facilitated by Health Workforce Queensland (HWQ) and co-funded by the Allied Health Professions' Office of Queensland (AHPOQ), Department of Health.

The challenges of building and sustaining a stable, high performing allied health workforce in rural and remote areas are well known. Consistent with many rural and remote areas, health services in south west Queensland report difficulties with recruitment, particularly of experienced practitioners, and retention of allied health professionals.

Effective rural and remote services require a multi-professional workforce that has the capacity to deliver the breadth and depth of services needed by the community. Rural and remote allied health professionals need to possess professional and clinical capabilities, service delivery skills and personal attributes required to work in these settings.

Project Aim

The aim of the scoping project was to work with key stakeholders to develop an inter-agency, collaborative, regional approach to allied health workforce development including recruitment, retention and capacity building, in health services in south west Queensland.

Project Output

The key project output was a proposal in the form of a two-year implementation plan for an inter-agency, collaborative workforce strategy. The plan has been designed to align to the needs of local health service providers and evidence of allied health workforce development enablers. The plan describes the strategy and provides guidance for partner organisations regarding opportunities, enablers, risks, governance and resources required for implementation. The two-year implementation plan has been presented to each partner organisation for endorsement at the conclusion of the scoping project.



The strategy focuses on attraction, development and support of the early career and mid-career allied health workforce using the AHRG Pathway. The proposed South West Queensland Inter-agency Allied Health Workforce Strategy will see:

- A primary focus on education and training, including post-graduate rural generalist practice study and work-based training for rural generalist trainees,
- AHRG training positions established in one or more primary care health service organisations, in addition to existing training roles in South West Hospital and Health Service (SWHHS), to form an inter-agency network of trainees,
- One or more inter-agency learning sets structured around cycles of successive workforce or service development projects, that enable AHRG trainees to apply their learnings, and support mid-career practitioners to develop leadership, planning, evaluation and management capabilities, and
- The proposed strategy leverage funding and resources available from HWQ, AHPOQ, the UDRH and Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH). Funding support to undertake the rural generalist program through these funders is a critical enabler for health service participation.

Proposed benefits

- This project provides direction for the development of an 'own-grown' allied health workforce model suitable for rural and remote areas with a number of health service organisations and multi-professional teams,
- Cross-agency collaboration, leveraging available training funding and education support can generate a critical mass of resources that each individual agency could not source or allocate independently,
- A common workforce strategy provides a platform to promote workforce attraction and build service capacity across the region,
- The AHRG Pathway, as a foundation of the workforce development strategy, can provide investment returns to organisations through:
 - Development of clinical and non-clinical (service / professional) skills for the early career workforce, and
 - Education outputs (activities, assessments) that can be tailored to service needs.
- Implementing a common workforce development strategy can build a critical mass of rural generalist trainees, to produce benefits from peer support, structured development time and collaborative supervision and learning facilitation across senior clinicians.



Policy and Workforce implications

Workforce reform:

- Implementing an 'own-grown' approach to allied health workforce development has the potential to develop and strengthen the rural allied health workforce pipeline, and
- Development of designated rural generalist training positions, if supported by required resources, education programs and professional supervision, has the potential to enhance the recruitment and retention of allied health professionals in rural and remote areas through providing an impetus for skill development, new professional challenges, and increased job satisfaction.

Education and Training:

- Adopting a collaborative, inter-agency approach enables small multi-professional rural and remote allied health teams to implement structured workforce development based on high-quality rural generalist post-graduate training and local education expertise,
- Modest investment is required at a regional level to enable a collaborative approach to workforce development, with potential benefits for each organisation through improved attraction of staff, clinical governance and service performance,
- There is potential to strengthen the alignment between allied health professions' pre-entry training programs and rural and remote competency requirements in order to address early career attraction and adjustment to rural and remote practice, and
- Inter-agency learning sets are anticipated to facilitate early career practitioners' development and engage senior / mid-career clinicians who are expanding their education and supervision capabilities, service development and leadership skills.

Service reform:

- Supported by appropriate training and clinical governance, allied health teams have the capacity to enhance inter-agency collaboration and networking to produced improvements to care integration, and
- There is a need to recognise in staffing, funding and commissioning of rural and remote services, the broad service requirements and drivers of retention in remote areas including access to career enrichment activities such as education and teaching.

For further information, please contact

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