



An Industry Development Plan for the NSW non- government human services sector.

June 2008

Evidence/ Rationale

The non-government human services sector receives over \$1.5 billion each year in funding, is comprised of over 7,000 organisations and delivers an extraordinary range of essential services to the people of NSW. Like any other vital and growing industry, it needs a long term strategic plan to ensure its sustainability and capacity to meet the demands of the future.

A recent national survey of workers in the industry by the Australian Service Union (ASU)¹ reveals the critical and growing retention and recruitment issues facing the sector. Nationally 52% of workers are not committed to staying in the industry beyond 5 years, and the vast majority of the respondents were from NSW. The report demonstrates that comparatively poor wages and conditions, lack of career opportunities and the difficulties and risks associated with the work are major reasons why people leave the sector and inhibit our ability to recruit quality staff.

Within NSW the major identified barriers to securing relevant educational qualifications were lack of time and the cost of courses. A number of reports across various sub-sectors of the industry have produced similar and additional findings; for example the *Working in Community Aged Care: Growth or Crisis* report² identified the sectors image, attracting younger workers, and competitive wages as some of the key issues facing the future workforce in aged care workforce. While the sector is experiencing substantial growth (22.6% between 1999-2004, ABS Labour Force Survey), it is also ageing relatively more

¹ Australian Services Union, Building Social Inclusion in Australia, priorities for the social and community services sector workforce, September 2007.

² Council on the Ageing, Working in Community Aged Care: Growth or Crisis? Summary of the Community Care Workforce Forum, December 2006

quickly than other sectors and experiencing increasing demand for its services (Australian Council of Social Service, 2007)

There is some data available for sections and sub programs within the industry but a serious lack of information about the whole NSW sector and its current and projected workforce needs. There is a priority need for research that 1.maps the composition and structure of the NSW NGO human services workforce: 2 identifies the current and emerging trends and needs within the workforce and 3.assesses the position of the sector workforce within the context of the current labour market, including factors impacting on retention and recruitment. This research should be pursued in conjunction with universities, and labour market analysts.

Actions

Over a three year period, commencing 2008;

Provide funding to develop a state wide industry plan for the non government community sector that includes:

- The development of a comprehensive workforce profile, including current demographics, trends, projected growth/gaps and recruitment capacity within the broader labour market.
- An industry-wide needs assessment and the development of collaborative cross - sector strategies to address emerging industry skills gaps and projected client needs.
- A marketing/communications strategy to enhance and improve the visibility and profile of the sector with prospective employees and the general public.
- The establishment of a state-wide wide non government community services industry Task Force comprised of key stakeholders across higher education and training, Government human services agencies, NCOSS, unions and other industry peaks.
- The development of a standard funding agreement that minimizes current high transaction costs, barriers to growth/investment and enables longer term planning.

Results

- A state-wide coordinated approach to the sectors development based on a comprehensive workforce profile that informs better planning to meet the current and projected needs of the community services industry and its clients.

- A highly skilled workforce with the capacity to deliver quality services that meet the needs of the people of NSW.
- An actively enabling funding, policy and regulatory framework that supports the growth of the sector.
- Enhanced capacity for the NGO sector to deliver quality services to the community in partnership with government.
- Improved capacity to attract and retain a quality workforce and effectively compete with other industries in the labour market.

Links with the State Plan:

Growing Prosperity Across NSW- P2,
Rights, Respect and Responsibility- R4
Delivering Better Services- S8