



# 7th National Housing Conference

30 October to 2 November 2012

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre

People — Place — Productivity





# Building a labour force foundation in the community and social housing sectors: Setting the scene

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# The Community Services Workforce

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- Over 80% of employees in all major community services sectors are women.
- Community Services employs many women:
  - Nearly 450,000 women (2012)
  - 8.6% of all employed Australian women (2012)
  - Up from 6.6% in 2000 – very fast growth
- Community Services vary greatly in size (direct care workers)
- Homelessness services is relatively small
- We don't have good data on social housing separately

# The Homelessness Workforce Compared



Sector	Number of direct care workers	EFT direct care workers	Perm., full-time/ Perm. part-time (per cent)	Proptn prof. (per cent)	Aged 50 or over (per cent)
Homelessness	11,600	7,550	51/31	43	25
Child Protection	11,250	8,500	68/17	56	18
Disability	58,200	25,000	25/50	9	33
Aged Care	207,400	124,900	10/65	23 (exc. mgrs)	25 (55+)
General Comm Services	23,900	12,300	39/42	29	32

# Dynamics of the workforce – recruitment and retention

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- **Finding jobs:**
  - Both formal and informal methods are important
- **Motivations for entering homelessness work:**
  - Altruism is common;
  - Intrinsic job characteristics are attractive;
  - Material rewards are less common motivations.
- **Why do people stay?**
  - Job satisfaction is high for intrinsic job aspects; lower for extrinsic ones;
  - Organizational commitment is quite high;
  - Workplace relationships are good.



# Career Pathways

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- Variability in pathways into comm services:
  - 30-40% of workers in homelessness come from other welfare work; more than in larger sectors.
  - Many enter early in work lives, especially professionals.
- Many enter jobs from outside the sector:
  - 65% of homelessness workers had not had paid jobs in the sector before current job
- Experience is more limited in smaller sectors like homelessness/social housing:
  - Over half of homelessness workers recruited from outside sector
  - One quarter of homelessness workers have less than 2 yrs experience
  - 50-60% have less than 5 years experience

# Key Recruitment and Retention Issues

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- A small workforce
- Attracting workers, dealing with turnover in a small workforce:
  - Employment contracts:
    - ✦ Higher pay
    - ✦ Job security
    - ✦ Career pathways in larger orgs, especially back to sector
  - Supporting positive workplace experiences
    - ✦ Ensuring that work and service delivery arrangements allow workers to be successful, to 'make a difference'
    - ✦ Reduce overwork (20-25% of prof/mgrl workers want to work less hours)
    - ✦ Monitor and support positive workplace relationships
    - ✦ Appropriate workplace flexibility (nearly 80% are women)
    - ✦ Imaginative responses to perceived lack of social recognition

# Qualifications and Skills

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- Professionals, especially, have formal qualifications
- Most have qualifications relevant to jobs
- Community services workers think they have the skills they need
- Workers tend to view own skills as appropriate:
  - Degree trained often see degrees as important (skills and ability)
  - Some vocationally trained see being naturally good at the job or having appropriate values and ethics or being experienced as more important
- Employers may not be so confident about skill levels
- Future skill needs:
  - Skills in working collaboratively across specialist/mainstream services
  - More advanced admin and tech skills due to service delivery arrangements and accountability requirements
  - Skills to deal with changing / increasingly complex client needs



# Further training

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- High rates of current study: 28% currently studying for a qualification.
- Stakeholder views:
  - Some see lack of training availability; others disagree
  - Access to training may be affected by lack of time or lack of funds
- Worker views:
  - High levels of access to in-service training
  - Specialised and advanced training less available than basic level generic training
  - Access problems for those outside capital cities
  - High cost of unsubsidised training

# Key Workforce Issues

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- Training and skills
  - Complex issue with diversity of views
  - Good induction, guided initial experience are needed for new recruits
  - Training for non-metro workers may be limited
  - Clients with complex needs require workers skilled in:
    - ✦ Working with such clients
    - ✦ Negotiating multiple mainstream providers



THE END