



Project Findings Related to:

# The Prevocational Training of Future NDIS Workers

28 March 2022

**NDIS Recovery Oriented Psychosocial Delivery Support Project**

Growing National Workforce Capability

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## Introduction

Mental Health Victoria implemented a government-funded Growing National Workforce Capability Project titled **NDIS Recovery Oriented Psychosocial Disability Support Project (ROPDS)** from 2020 to 2022.

The purpose of this project was to highlight ideas and make recommendations with the intention of building the capacity of the NDIS provider market. The ROPDS Project is focused specifically on the national Psychosocial workforce with emphasis on better defining the capabilities required to deliver recovery oriented NDIS support.

This report seeks to contribute to the achievement of Project Objective 7:

*“That the Project findings directly influence improvements in the pre-vocational training of future NDIS support workers”.*

## Background and Case for change

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has significantly changed disability support work, which now includes the support of many people experiencing psychosocial disability. This has led to significant growth in demand in supports to people with psychosocial and dual disabilities. It is becoming increasingly urgent to ensure that pre-vocational qualifications sufficiently equip the disability workforce with the essential capabilities in mental health, recovery-oriented and trauma-informed practice. It is vital the quality of training meets the requirements of the workforce delivering these supports. Current changes are required to ensure a workforce with adequate, entry-level skills to better meet the needs of people with psychosocial disability.

Estimates from the National Mental Health Service Planning Framework (NMHSPF) suggest that about 690,000 people with mental illness would benefit from some type of psychosocial support in 2019-20. Among them are 290,000 <sup>(1. pp 827)</sup> or so people with the highest level of need currently lack the support or level of support they need. We also know that 32% of adults with disability (and 40% of participants with profound disabilities) experience high or very high levels of psychological distress, as opposed to 8% of adults without disability.

In response to this need the Productivity Commission <sup>1</sup> recommended that the States/Territories and the Commonwealth Governments work together to increase quantum funding for psychosocial supports. The recently released National Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention addressed support for psychosocial supports outside the NDIS.

The Direct Client Care and Support Industry Reference Committee 2019 Industry Skills Forecast report indicates that an additional 90,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff will be needed to assist in the delivery of services through the NDIS, representing a mix of both highly skilled positions and roles not requiring formal qualifications. <sup>5</sup>

## **Rationale for urgent need for upskilling the NDIS workforce in quality and safety**

NDIS participants, carers and family members deserve adequately skilled workers with the capabilities to deliver safe and effective psychosocial and recovery-oriented supports

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability was announced on 4 April 2019 and was established by the Australian Government to enquire into violence, abuse, neglect and the exploitation of people with disability. It has relevance to the work done by the NDIS workforce, especially as it aligns with the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework.

Fundamental to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of participants with psychosocial disability is the upskilling of the NDIS workforce who provide psychosocial supports in fundamental mental health and recovery-oriented capabilities.

## **Status of accredited training relating to Recovery-Oriented Practice**

### **The role of accredited training in workforce development**

Vocational Education and Training (VET) refers to the nationally accredited training courses that result in qualifications at the Certificate and Diploma levels. These courses can only be delivered by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) who have been registered by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

Common VET qualifications held by workers in the NDIS space include:

- Certificate IV in Mental Health
- Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work
- Certificate IV in Disability
- Certificate III in Individual Support
- And other qualifications relating to community services

### **Accessibility of VET training**

The accessibility of accredited training for potential students across the country will vary, and is dependent on a number of factors, such as:

- The number of RTOs offering the particular course
- Whether those courses are available online or only face-to-face
- The cost of the course and whether there are any Government subsidies/ concessions available. Fees/ Tuition costs are also dependent on a range of factors (full details of fee structures and concessions are found here <https://www.gooduniversitiesguide.com.au/study-information/Funding-your-education/VET-costs-and-loans> )

## **VET training as only one component of workforce development**

VET training is only one component in the skill development of the NDIS workforce, and in the development of recovery-oriented capabilities. Generally, the VET qualifications are seen as ‘pre-vocational training’ or as pre-requisites for the job. For example, the Cert IV in Mental Health Peer Work is recognised as a pre-requisite for the Psychosocial Recovery Coach Lived Experience role.

However, workers are continuously learning on the job both in formal and informal ways, and through their interactions with others in the workplace. The most effective ongoing development of recovery-oriented practice requires that workers have opportunities for a range of formal professional development activities such as orientation sessions, short courses, webinars, and communities of practice, as well as through team meetings, supervision, mentoring, and learning from the lived experience of the people they support. However, the quality of the learning outcomes from this on-the-job education can vary greatly depending on whether these training opportunities are:

- recognised and supported by the worker’s supervisor/ manager,
- structured as part of an individualised learning and development plan,
- reinforced through discussions with others and reflective practice,
- supported by an organisational learning culture,
- supported by organisational systems, culture and practice that reflect the principles of strengths-based, recovery and trauma orientations.

In conclusion, VET qualifications can provide a firm foundation on which workers can build their capabilities and ensure the safety and wellbeing of both themselves and the people they support. However, recovery-oriented practice requires that workers continue to reflect on their practice, grow in self-awareness and skill, and continue to adjust to any changes in the workplace and broader NDIS context.

## **Nationally accredited competency relevant to supporting Recovery Oriented Practice**

The most relevant units of competency relating to supporting recovery-oriented practice come from the following qualifications:

CHC43315 Certificate IV in Mental Health, and CHC43515 Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work

- CHCMHS001 Work with people with mental health issues
- CHCMHS002 Establish self-directed recovery relationships
- CHCMHS003 Provide recovery oriented mental health services
- CHCMHS004 Work collaboratively with the care network and other services
- CHCMHS005 Provide services to people with co-existing mental health and alcohol and other drugs issues
- CHCMHS006 Facilitate the recovery process with the person, family and carers
- CHCMHS007 Work effectively in trauma informed care
- CHCMHS008 Provide and facilitate self-advocacy
- CHCMHS010 Implement recovery-oriented approaches to complexity
- CHCMHS011 Assess and promote social, emotional and physical wellbeing

- CHCPWK001 Apply peer work practices in the Mental Health sector
- CHCPWK002 Contribute to the continuous improvement of mental health services for consumers and carers
- CHCPWK003 Apply lived experience in mental health peer work
- CHCPWK004 Work effectively in consumer mental health peer work
- CHCPWK005 Work effectively with carers as a mental health peer worker

## Current training for NDIS Workers

**CHC33015 - Certificate III in Individual Support** is the main qualification aligned to the Disability Support Worker role. However, this is not a mandated qualification for NDIS Support Workers, as the NDIS does not require any pre-requisite qualification for this job role.

This qualification was developed to meet the needs of the Aged Care, Disability, or Home and Community sectors by allowing for packaging of the qualification using specialisations. However, there is currently no specialisation for mental health, and only one elective unit relating to mental health, *CHCMHS001 Work with people with mental health issues*. Given that the training providers offering this course can choose from a total of 63 electives, it is unlikely that the mental health elective is offered in many Certificate III courses. Even where the elective unit is offered, it is still not considered sufficient training to prepare workers for working with participants with psychosocial disability using recovery-oriented approaches.

## Skill Sets

Training package skill sets are composed of two or more units of competency from a training package and are designed to meet licensing or regulatory requirements, or a defined industry need.

Skill sets have become recognised as an important short form of training for the modern world of work. They are seen to have a variety of purposes, including upskilling, compliance and licensing, meeting a defined industry need, and as an entry pathway to further training.

### Current skill sets available:

**CHCSS00102 – Mental Health Co-existing Needs Skill Set** is best suited to experienced support workers looking to build on the skills acquired from their work role or looking to formalise those skills. The course provides the additional skills and knowledge you need to enter supervisory roles, and also to provide care to people with more complex requirements.

This skill set includes 4 units of competency from the Certificate IV in Mental Health:

- CHCMHS004 Work collaboratively with the care network and other services
- CHCMHS005 Provide services to people with co-existing mental health and alcohol and other drugs issues
- CHCMHS010 Implement recovery-oriented approaches to complexity
- CHCMHS011 Assess and promote social, emotional, and physical wellbeing

*Note: If considering the delivery of Mental Health Co-existing Needs as a NDIS specific skill set it may be advisable to simplify the content by removal of the CHCMHS005 unit relating to AOD.*

### **CHCSS00103 - Mental Health Peer Work Skill Set**

This skill set reflects the skill requirements for peer workers entering the mental health workforce.

It includes 3 units of competency from the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work:

- CHCPWK001 Apply peer work practices in the mental health sector
- CHCPWK003 Apply lived experience in mental health peer work
- CHCLEG001 Work legally and ethically

### **22532VIC - Course in Supporting People with Psychosocial Disability**

This course was created by the Victorian Government and registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority. However even though it is very relevant nationally for NDIS context, there are currently only 12 RTOs approved to deliver this course, so it can be assumed it is not widely available. Many of these RTOs are Victorian based, and many of the courses require direct face-to-face attendance, further reducing its accessibility to the national workforce.

#### **About the course:**

Successful completion of this course provides participants with the skills and knowledge to work as a disability support worker with people with a psychosocial disability and features:

- responding to crisis situations and supporting the safety of people with disability through identifying and reporting abuse and/or family violence.
- introduction to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the NDIS worker role responsibilities and expectations.
- understanding the varied support needs of people with psychosocial disability and recovery-oriented practice.
- reflective practice: informing workers of the need to demonstrate a high degree of thoughtfulness, sensitivity and empathy in all aspects of their work.
- self-care and management of stressors in the work environment.

The course comprises 5 units of competency:

- VU22859 Provide support to consumers with psychosocial disability
- CHCCCS019 Recognise and respond to crisis situations
- VU22855 Work effectively within a NDIS service environment
- VU22853 Apply human rights-based approach to the identification, prevention and reporting of disability abuse
- VU22733 Identify and provide initial response to family violence risk

## Recommendations

The following section addresses the requirements of the ROPDS Project Objective:

- *Use the Project findings to provide recommendations to the VET sector on the prevocational training of future NDIS workers.*

As part of the NDIS ROPDS Project – Growing National Workforce Capability, Mental Health Victoria made a submission to Skills IQ recommending the following:

*“In summary, the urgent need to provide adequate supports to people with psychosocial disability and dual disability along with the growth in the delivery of disability supports for people with mental illness, means that the Certificate III Individual Support and Certificate IV Disability are critical qualifications in meeting the growing need for an effectively skilled, entry-level care workforce.*

*To immediately address the gap in skills to support these groups, the Certificate III Individual Support and Certificate IV Disability should reference the performance outcomes of the Victorian unit **VU22859 Provide support to consumers with psychosocial disability.***

*The Certificate IV Disability should also include unit **CHCMHS007 Work effectively in trauma informed care** as an elective. Where possible, action should be taken to develop a compressive skill set which embeds the principles of those frameworks that are essential to working with people with psychosocial and dual disabilities.”*



## Recommendation 1

Recommendation for changes to be made to the packaging rules of the CHC33015 Certificate III in Individual Support to include a new Mental Health Recovery Specialisation, made up of the following units:

- CHCMHS001 Work with people with mental health issues
- VU22859 Provide support to consumers with psychosocial disability
- CHCCCS019 Recognise and respond to crisis situations
- CHCMHS007 Work effectively in trauma informed care

## Recommendation 2

To address the competency gaps in recovery-oriented practice and knowledge in the qualification, **CHC33015 Certificate III in Individual Support, the following is highly recommended:**

- **Recommendation 2.1** - to have VU22859 reviewed for recognition as a national unit of competency.
- **Recommendation 2.2** - Import VU22859 as a core unit to the Cert III individual support to form a specialist stream for psychosocial disability made up of the following units:
  - CHCMHS001 Work with people with mental health issues
  - VU22859 Provide support to consumers with psychosocial disability
  - CHCCCS019 Recognise and respond to crisis situations
  - CHCMHS007 Work effectively in trauma informed care

## Recommendation 3

### Recommendation for the creation of new Skill Sets for Recovery-Oriented Mental Health

Both of the following skill sets have been recommended for approval based on the fact that the units already exist, however the skill sets themselves have not been 'approved'. It offers a faster way to fill the gaps in qualifications and match the skills gaps in the workforce rather than trying to design and approve new units of competency.

#### Recovery-oriented mental health skill set - Foundational

The following skill set is aimed at those NDIS workers performing direct support work under the supervision of more skilled mental health workers. It offers an option for workers with existing Certificate III qualifications, or experienced disability workers, to upskill in psychosocial disability and mental health recovery.

Alternatively, it offers a shorter training option for employers wanting to upskill their support workforce by providing access to this skill set on the job. This could be done by the employer partnering with a local RTO who is approved to deliver these units.

This skill set aligns to AQF level 3.

- CHCMHS001 Work with people with mental health issues
- CHCCCS015 Provide individualised support
- VU22859 Provide support to consumers with psychosocial disability
- CHCCCS019 Recognise and respond to crisis situations

#### Recovery-oriented mental health skill set – Advanced.

The following skill set is aimed at those workers performing coordination roles, recovery support and/or supervision of direct support workers. This skill set would fill the training gap for those workers who already have Certificate IV or higher qualifications, but not in the mental health area, and who are needing to upskill in psychosocial disability and mental health recovery.

This skill set aligns to AQF level 4.

- CHCMHS002 Establish self-directed recovery relationships **OR**
- VU22859 Provide support to consumers with psychosocial disability
- PLUS**
- CHCMHS007 Work effectively in trauma informed care
- CHCMHS003 Provide recovery oriented mental health services
- CHCCCS019 Recognise and respond to crisis situations

## Recommendation 4

### **CHCSS00102 – Mental Health Co-Existing Needs Skill Set**

That the CHCSS00102 – Mental Health Co-Existing Needs Skill Set be promoted as a relevant upskilling option for experienced support workers in the NDIS looking to build skills in mental health, enter supervisory roles, or to provide care to people with more complex recovery practice requirements.

## Recommendation 5

### **Clause 1.5 of the ASQA Standards for RTO's states that:**

*The RTO's training and assessment practices are relevant to the needs of industry and informed by industry engagement.*

It is recommended that all RTOs delivering units of competency specifically relating to mental health recovery include the voices of Lived Experience as part of their 'engagement with industry'. Within the mental health sector, the Lived Experience of consumers, carers and LE workers is an intrinsic part of the 'industry' and this experience should inform all aspects of the industry including the training and assessment of workers.

## Recommendation 6

It is recommended that trainers with Lived Experience of mental health and personal recovery, be utilized in the training and assessment of Mental Health units of competency in some capacity. Recognising that it is still necessary to comply with the VET Quality Framework and Standards, which means that these Lived Experience trainers would need to have the required Certificate IV in TAE to train and assess as well as the relevant industry qualifications/ experience.

## References

1. Productivity Commission 2020 Final Report: Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health
2. National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan 2021
3. Australian Government's NDIS National Workforce Plan
4. Direct Client Care and Support Industry Reference Committee 2019 Industry Skills Forecast
5. Australian Government Department of Social Services (2019) Growing the NDIS Market and Workforce. Commonwealth of Australia
6. [The Current Landscape: Good Practice in Recovery Oriented Psychosocial Disability Support – ROPDS Stage One Literature Review](#)
7. [The Future Horizon: Good Practice in Recovery-Oriented Psychosocial Disability Support - ROPDS Stage Two Synthesis Report](#)
8. [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)