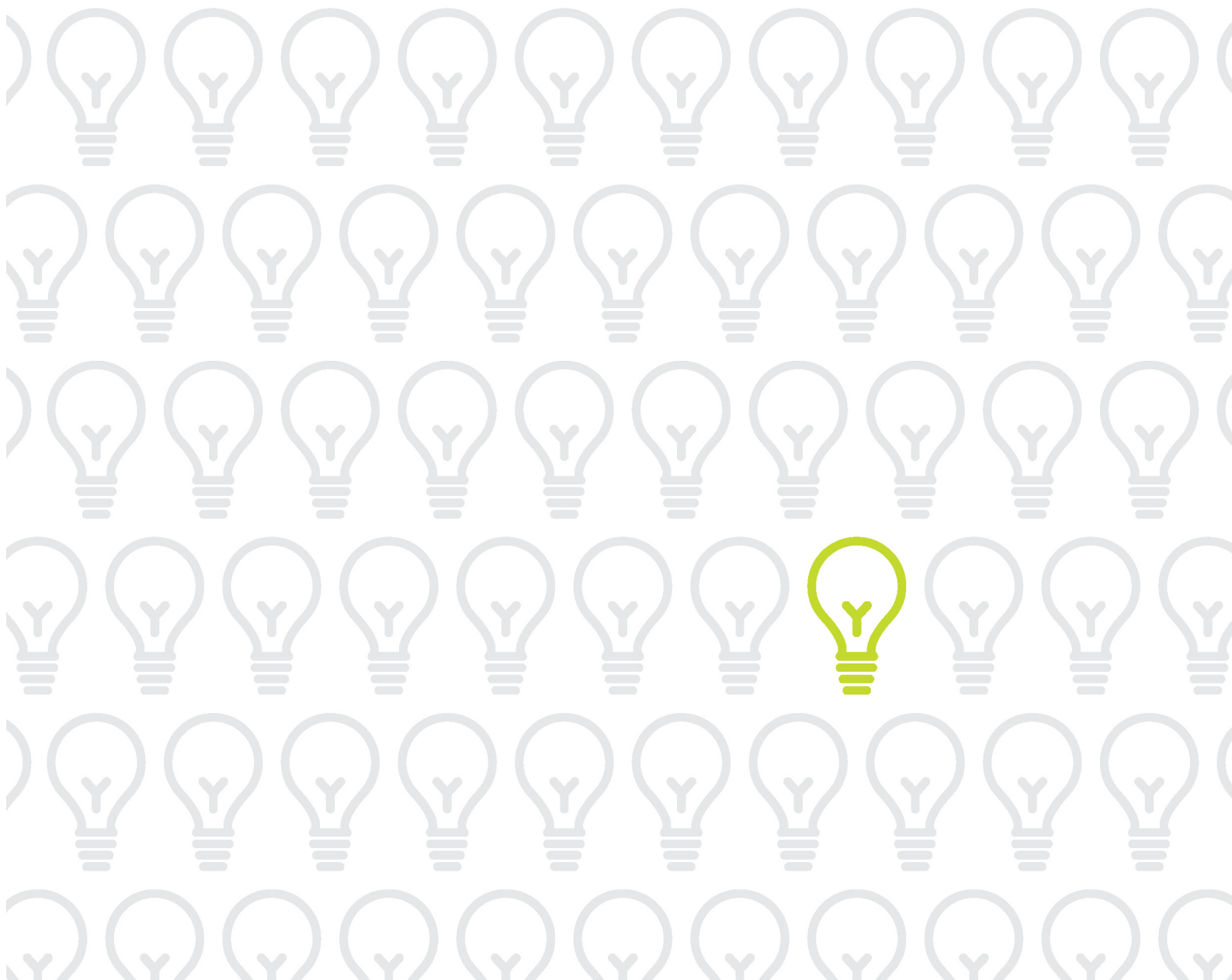




CONSULTING AUSTRALIA

ACT Community Services Industry

Workforce Data and Community Needs Analysis



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Executive Summary

Insight Consulting was commissioned in mid-2018 by the ACT Industry Strategy Steering Group to undertake this project as an action under the ACT Community Services Industry Strategy 2016-26. The project aimed to:

- Describe the current ACT community services industry workforce
- Project growth, diversity, skill and knowledge needs into the future, to best meet the needs of the ACT community.

The project's overall goal was to assist the industry to ensure that future workforce development effectively meets emerging community needs.

Insight used a mix of methods including a review of current literature covering interstate and sector-specific work, data gathering and analysis, and in-depth consultations with a wide range of ACT industry people and other stakeholders, to arrive at the findings, recommendations, workforce forecast, and a proposed tool to support the industry.

The reports on community needs and current and future workforce found that the ACT community services industry faces socio-demographic and workforce issues common to the industry around Australia. The population is growing, with aged cohorts growing fastest. When combined with recent government policy changes, this is putting increasing pressure on the **aged services and disability** sectors in particular, with workforce shortages emerging.

Worker supply will need to be enhanced with active strategies to recruit and retain younger people, seek to improve pay and conditions, and take a more strategic approach to skills, qualifications and professional development.

To ensure a workforce fit for the future, the ACT community services industry needs to **embrace the vision and actions identified in the Industry Plan**, incorporating them into workforce planning and development. Consultations suggested that this is not yet happening as effectively as needed, and will not without stronger leadership at both industry and organisation levels.

"Industry is not a word I use, and I rarely hear it from others in ACT community services"

The slower than anticipated progress on a **strong industry identity** is not due to a lack of willingness to engage collectively. The impediments are mainly structural factors, enumerated here, that relegate industry identity to a second order priority for most leaders:

- 1) an unusually complex operating environment for a single industry
- 2) many agencies report that they are in 'survival mode'
- 3) changes in the industry undermine local connections
- 4) limited data is available on the industry as a whole
- 5) need to improve corporate governance and leadership capability at both organizational and industry levels

A number of local initiatives could help **build industry identity**, as well as drive workforce-related innovation and quality improvement at an organizational level. Notable is the Leading Social Change Board Network, auspiced by ACTCOSS. Such moves require greater promotion and take-up, and can

help generate enhanced and standardized approaches to workforce planning and planning capability, as key competencies for governance bodies and senior management.

We received many comments on the roles and effectiveness of peak bodies, the Peaks Forum, Joint Community Government Reference Group, and Industry Strategy Steering Group. A strong theme emerging from the consultations was the potential for **stronger partnerships with clearer purpose**, with the right people and agencies at the table, to advance industry and workforce issues.

There was a widespread view that the industry could significantly improve its engagement with Skills Canberra, CIT, ACT schools and colleges, and the broader **education and training sector**. This would help address targeting and quality of training courses for an emerging workforce, and assist with gaining new recruits to the industry.

Noting the central role played by the **Industry Strategy Steering Group**, several recommendations are aimed at enhancing the Group's stewardship of the Industry Strategy.

There is also a role for senior policy makers in ACT Government to work collectively with the industry and community to create an **operating environment with less complexity**, and greater certainty and stability.

The Industry Strategy noted a rapidly changing **environment for community services** where the business and norms of government, for-profit and not-for-profit sectors were converging.

Our consultations and the literature indicate that new models of service development and delivery to meet emerging community needs will require these **workforce characteristics**:

- a) attitudes that are less about 'helping' and more about **empowering** and working with communities
- b) basic **business acumen** at all levels; rostering, financial literacy, project planning and management, compliance with quality standards
- c) skills aligned to **common practice frameworks**
- d) more peer-based and **lived experience workers**
- e) a workforce that better **reflects the community it serves**; including younger workers, and more men
- f) staff in universal services having the skills to enable **earlier support**
- g) greater focus on **achieving client/community outcomes**, with attendant functional measurement and evaluation skills
- h) in advocacy agencies, a better understanding of, and the **ability to influence policy and funding processes**

To get to this future workforce, it was widely recognised that a number of current issues need to be addressed.

Most mainstream agencies acknowledged that they need to do better with **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce** support and development, and partnerships. While intent is often expressed through the prevalence of Reconciliation Action Plans, it seems that few mainstream agencies are on track to achieve their targets. This was confirmed by Aboriginal Community

Controlled Organizations who perceived a lack of cultural competence in all but a handful of mainstream community services, and had a similar critique about many government services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander informants suggested that **cultural awareness** training needed to be of high quality, covering competency and safety rather than just awareness, and include input from the local community. There is scope for greater collaboration across mainstream and community-controlled agencies, building on good practice to date.

Volunteers are already a significant part of the local workforce, with Volunteering and Contact ACT reporting that 70% of agencies have at least some volunteers, including on boards and committees. However, there are wide differences in how they are engaged. Only a small number of agencies have strong volunteer induction, management, support and training, with volunteers integrated into the staff team.

Volunteers are a potentially large but largely untapped workforce resource, and there are a number of options to better support the industry to engage them.

There are several notable examples of **workers with lived experience** strengthening the capability of their organisations. Almost all agencies consulted understood the need to effectively support lived experience staff regarding professional boundaries, the risk of co-dependency, and vicarious trauma, through sound management practices, professional or clinical supervision, and active support for self-care. However only a few had robust policies and processes.

Most agencies considered that their workforces reflected the **diversity** of the general population, especially regarding culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and were not considering any particular targeting, such as explicitly attracting younger people. This is despite trends in workforce projections which suggest otherwise.

Professional development underpins efforts to transform or even maintain staff capabilities, and was the issue most often raised through the consultations. For most it has become a discretionary item, that is becoming harder to fund.

The nature and quality of much on-the-job professional development appears to be ad hoc and individualized. Options are most often discussed as part of individual work planning and career development, but not so often at agency, industry or system level.

There is a need to resolve misunderstandings between industry members and government about whether professional development should be considered integral to the cost of doing business.

We were alerted to examples of attempted **joined up professional development** opportunities through sub-sector peaks, or between industry and government. However, these are seen as “pockets of good practice” rather than the norm.

A **training passport** is proposed. This would enhance the value of professional development and enable qualifications and learnings to be readily transferred and recognised, as employees move within the industry.

There is also scope for greater involvement of current or potential **service users** in professional development, given the highly useful perspectives they can bring. This is occurring to some extent in sectors with organized consumer groups and agencies with a strong focus on staff with lived experience – particularly the health sector. This will need to become standard practice if the industry is to embrace co-production.

A number of community services agencies and some peak bodies have developed productive links with the **educational and training sector** for student placements and advice on course content and quality. However, these are most often opportunistic and ad hoc.

There is currently no obvious structure or process at industry level that might enable a constructive airing of these issues and support strategic reforms to benefit all parties. It was broadly agreed that there should be.

ACT community services industry appears to be slow to introduce **new technologies**. Given these often require large investments based on forward planning, many informants noted that the uncertain environment made such decisions more difficult. There is often a lack of expertise on boards and within management when technology commitments are made, that can result in less than optimal results.

Few agencies are currently focussing much on how to help improve **service user experiences** and outcomes through technology, such as apps used by clients to enable self-assessment, remote connection to services, or on-line bookings.

There is scope for greater sharing of information across organizations and peak bodies, and for the 'big conversations' about the **future of technology** and how it might relate to evolving service provision and client needs.

The industry change agenda heralds **new service models and practices** which have implications for emerging job roles, and are likely to require major changes to qualifications, skills and attributes/behaviours. This will be not just for specific positions in sub-sectors, but across agencies and service delivery areas.

If the industry is to see **co-production** as more than a buzz-word, it will be both a challenge and a critical opportunity for the industry to move beyond a traditional service provision mode, to deep and effective engagement with the communities it serves.

These findings strengthen the case for a more robust industry-wide approach to capability development.

There was general agreement that the **industry's current 'value proposition'** is a way of working that is strongly values-based and people-oriented, and gives opportunities for teamwork, flexibility, and diversity.

This is somewhat undermined by the push towards **casualisation and underemployment** in some sectors, high turnover, and the particular Canberra factor of competition from large ACT and Commonwealth public service employers. Informants highlighted the need for higher pay rates, career progression options, and more robust professional development.

Senior managers were most likely to raise government policy and funding issues, and the industrial context, as creating **difficulties** for attraction and retention. Some non-management staff raised the quality of leadership and management within their organisations.

To meet the projected growth in workforce demand, especially for the disability and aged care sectors, a range of matters were canvassed to **improve attraction and retention**, including:

- **clearer messaging** about the industry, and its role in social change and social justice
- new and improved career **pathways**, including across the industry, eg. establishing roles for senior clinicians/practitioners who are broadly equivalent to senior managers

- more strategic approaches to enhancing **vocational education and training** course content, and on-the-job professional development
- ways to **better target new and younger workers**, and establishing pipelines for new recruits, through work/student placements from secondary schools and colleges as well as the tertiary sector
- greater use of industry-wide resources, and partnerships with community-controlled agencies, to better engage potential **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees**, and support them in mainstream workplaces
- shared approaches to better supporting workers with **lived experience**
- explicitly **targeting volunteers** as a pool for recruitment to paid positions
- a new collaborative dialogue between key partners to consider **industrial reform** and improving **workplace practices**; to include employers, unions, government, service users and communities.

To meet current and future workforce growth requirements, those needs to be identified on an ongoing basis. The proposed Snapshot Tool will enable information to be collected regularly. It will include qualitative information about the workforce's engagement and concerns, to complement the quantitative data from other sources on industry and sector skills shortages that may be emerging.

Key Messages

“Agencies are focused on the staff they have now, but not the ones they’ll need later”

1. The 2016 Industry Strategy noted that community services in the ACT were facing a period of significant change. This included new models of service design and delivery in partnership with the community, new ways of doing business, and a stronger focus on achieving social and economic outcomes.
2. Two years on, Insight has found that most agencies, and the industry as a whole, are not well prepared for this future, particularly in regard to emerging workforce needs. The key internal challenges are:
 - leadership effectiveness
 - workforce planning
 - high staff turnover, particularly in lower paid and more casualised sectors/occupations
 - professional development
3. Projections suggest rapid growth, particularly in disability services and aged care, will put increasing pressure on the whole industry.
4. Worker supply will need to be enhanced with active strategies to recruit and retain younger people, seek to improve pay and conditions, and take a more strategic approach to skills, qualifications, capabilities and professional development, in partnership with key stakeholders outside the industry.

5. Preparing for the future workforce is as much about the how as the how many. There are many 'pockets of good practice' and innovation demonstrated by agencies, and in some cases across sectors. However, these are not being routinely disseminated and adopted. Opportunities are being missed to ensure that good practice becomes standard practice, across the industry.
6. ACT Government has a key role to play in creating an operating environment with less complexity and greater long-term certainty. This includes advocating for consistent policy and funding settings with the Commonwealth Government, and working more effectively with the industry and community on co-producing effective community and government services.
7. To provide the necessary platform for change, the industry requires a stronger and more cohesive identity, both internally and externally, as groundwork for the actions needed. The industry 'architecture' of Peaks Forum, ISSG and JCGRG will need attention to ensure it is fit for future purpose.

INFOGRAPHIC OF KEY REPORT FINDINGS

FACTORS DECREASING SERVICE DEMAND

- Existing and renewed early intervention and prevention efforts

FACTORS DECREASING WORKER SUPPLY

- Lower proportion of people undertaking vocational education and training (VET)
- Insecure employment tenure for workers
- Insufficient professional development opportunities and support
- Low pay rates relative to other industries
- Absence of clear career pathways



SERVICE DEMAND



WORKER SUPPLY



FACTORS INCREASING SERVICE DEMAND

- Growing population - all age groups
- Higher number of children 0-12 years
- Higher proportion of older persons
- Higher rates of disability / complex needs
- Higher number of unpaid carers
- Higher number of older persons not able to speak English well or at all
- Continuing disadvantage
- Government policy changes increasing funding for disability and aged care service



FACTORS INCREASING WORKER SUPPLY

- Increased Year 12 attainment rates (with corresponding increase in literacy & numeracy)
- Higher proportion of persons undertaking university study
- Increased proportion of people with practical caring experience
- Growing proportion of young people and young adults
- Decreasing median age of workers
- Decrease in availability of low skilled jobs in the broader ACT economy

UNKNOWN FUTURE CHANGES AFFECTING DEMAND AND SUPPLY

- Volunteer levels
- Unemployment levels
- Changing societal values
- Impact of technology
- Risk that non-demand funded services will remain at current resource and staffing levels

INDUSTRY (INCLUDING DISAGGREGATED SUB-SECTOR) DATA GAPS

- Turnover rates between positions and sub-sectors
 - Under-employment rates
 - Casualisation and contract work trends
- Knowledge of which positions are most difficult to recruit and retain
 - Retirement and exit intentions

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

ISSG to consider amendments to the guiding themes of the Industry Strategy's Workforce Plan, as follows:

1. Cultivate industry and agency leadership, identity, and workforce planning
2. Strengthen capability and workforce readiness
3. Improve attraction and retention of the workforce
4. Grow the workforce to meet current and future needs

Recommendation 2

With oversight by the ISSG/JCGRG, and in partnership with consumers and the industry, ACT Government should work on policy and funding reform aimed at:

- a) consistency across all ACT Government agencies on any proposed changes, such as commissioning for outcomes
- b) procurement process that enables clear demonstration and assessment of the true cost of service delivery, including workforce attraction, retention and development
- c) an emphasis on local community connections and collaborative practice
- d) long-term funding as the default as far as possible, subject to sensible risk management
- e) opportunities to influence the Commonwealth to drive consistency across jurisdictions.

Recommendation 3

ISSG to encourage ACT community services agencies to review their governance policies, procedures and performance to ensure they have strong leadership capability to plan and develop their future workforce.

Recommendation 4

ISSG to encourage boards and committees to work more collaboratively to share expertise and resources, to both improve organizational performance, and to assist collective efforts to achieve the vision of the Industry Strategy. Tools to achieve this include:

- Active participation in the Leading Social Change Board Network
- use of the Common Core Assessment Tool

Recommendation 5

ISSG should consider a range of matters to improve the context for implementation of the Community Services Industry Strategy and its associated Workforce Plan, including:

- a) strengthening and streamlining industry architecture, including resourcing
- b) a whole-of-government policy, procurement and funding review for the industry (as per Rec 2)
- c) an assessment of the effectiveness of ISSG to date, including
 - o links with peak bodies, Peaks Forum and JCGRG
 - o consideration of any adjustments needed to membership, to ensure the effective participation of all key parties
- d) development of a practical workplan and/or priorities for the next 12 months and beyond, including in particular;
 - o strategies encouraging active engagement of stakeholders to drive a more clearly articulated, high profile and relevant industry identity, both within the industry and externally.

Recommendation 6

ISSG to consider including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination as a priority in any review of the Industry Strategy and Workforce Plan

Recommendation 7

ISSG, in collaboration with Volunteering and Contact ACT, to promulgate good practice on engagement, support and use of volunteers.

Recommendation 8

ISSG and peak bodies to disseminate good practice on employing workers with lived experience and peer-led services.

Recommendation 9

ACT Government to clarify its approach to professional development through human services procurement processes.

Recommendation 10

ISSG to consider the applicability of a portable training entitlement system across the industry.

Recommendation 11

ISSG to develop ways to plan system-wide professional development, including opportunities for industry and government staff to train together and experience secondments or job swaps, and the involvement of consumers and community members.

Recommendation 12

- (a) ISSG/JCGRG to consider the development of a structure or process to enable a strategic partnership of the industry with education and training providers, Skills Canberra and relevant trade unions, with the aim of a coordinated approach to future workforce training needs, course content and quality, and student engagement.
- (b) As an initial practical step, ISSG to explore the potential for a CIT-industry co-design process to better align qualifications, course content and delivery with emerging job roles and capabilities.

Recommendation 13

IT strategy and systems development across the industry should be driven by:

- enhanced information sharing between agencies, based on client control over their information
- building the industry's capability in digital technology, through joint training and shared practice.

Recommendation 14

An early priority for strategic partnership on education and training (as per Rec 12(a)) should be industry-wide approaches to develop 'pipelines' for new young recruits. Practical examples such as the Geelong Careers in Community Services and Health Program should be considered.

Recommendation 15

ISSG to consider processes to enable industry-wide sharing and adaption of good practices for attraction and retention of community services paid staff and volunteers.

Recommendation 16

ISSG to consider industrial reform and workplace practices for its forward agenda, with the aim of enhancing pay, conditions and sustainable quality services across the industry.

Recommendation 17

ISSG to consider the suitability of the proposed Snapshot Tool to measure the future status of the community services workforce.

1. Project Purpose, Background and Method

Insight Consulting was commissioned by the Industry Strategy Steering Group (ISSG) to undertake this project as an action under the ACT Community Services Industry Strategy 2016-26.

The project was guided by the Industry Strategy's vision:

- Deliver quality services to create more connected communities
- Undertake community development
- Put needs of clients and communities at the centre of everything we do
- Be a trusted voice with a strong evidence base to shape policies

The ISSG commissioned five projects under the Workforce Plan of the Industry Strategy, through three consultancy groups:

- Evaluation framework for the Community Services Industry Strategy – Insight Consulting
- Workforce data and community needs analysis – Insight Consulting
- Workforce & career mapping for pathways across careers & sectors – Insight Consulting
- Framework to support consistent onboarding, support, coaching, and mentoring – Volunteering and Contact ACT
- Identification of learning and development opportunities to support emerging leaders – Yellow Edge

This project aimed to:

- Describe the current ACT community services industry workforce
- Project growth, diversity, skill and knowledge needs into the future, to best meet the needs of the ACT community

The project's overall goal was to assist the industry to ensure that future workforce development effectively meets emerging community needs.

Method

Our approach to the project followed these steps:

- Information from stakeholders, data sources, and literature review to inform a **current workforce profile report**
- Data gathering, and stakeholder engagement through interviews, survey, focus group and forums, to inform the **community needs assessment report** workforce
- Develop **future workforce report**
- Develop and test **tool or methodology** to support the industry for future data gathering on the workforce
- Draft final report, and presentation

We used a mix of methods including a review of current literature including interstate and sector-specific work, data gathering and analysis, and in-depth consultations with a wide range of ACT industry people and other stakeholders.

Forty-one consultation interviews and focus groups were held with a wide variety of stakeholders in the community services industry, ACT Government, educational institutions, unions and others, listed at Attachment F. A mid-point workshop, attended by 35 people, was held on 7 December 2018 to test preliminary findings, and gain further insights into the key issues. Regular progress reports were provided to the ISSG, and feedback received was incorporated.

After conducting a horizon scan, four data collections with the greatest currency, jurisdictional and industry relevance for workforce profiling in the ACT were identified:

- ABS *Census of Population and Housing*;
- ACTCOSS/UNSW *State of the Community Services Sector* report;
- ACT Portable Long Service Leave *Industry Workforce Analysis*; and
- data held by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

An assessment of the features and limitations of these collections was carried out with reference to study samples, study tools, study safeguards and study analysis. Relevant information from each of these collections, including newly constructed tables containing Census data, are presented and analysed in the reports at Attachments A – D:

- A. ACT Community Needs Analysis
- B. Report on the current characteristics of the ACT Community Services Industry workforce (*this report and associated sub-sector profiles*)
- C. Report that projects future workforce needs
- D. Tool to support the sector to undertake regular snapshots of the workforce.

Industry wide data gaps were identified, and a proposed snapshot methodology was developed to address these gaps in the future, enable a workforce profile baseline to be established, and progress to be confidently monitored.

To structure this report, Insight has used the themes from the Industry Strategy's Workforce Plan, with some modifications as suggested through the course of the project, noted below. The intention was to enable line-of-sight between the findings and recommendations, and the Workforce Plan's objectives and actions, to enable easier consideration of implementation issues.

All quoted remarks are from interviews or focus groups conducted during the course of this project, unless otherwise referenced. Some comments have been modified slightly to preserve the anonymity of the speaker or their organisation.

How to read this report

The four reports at Attachments A – D are summarised in the next section. They can be read as stand-alone documents, but are designed to be complementary. For instance, data gaps highlighted in the Future Workforce Report inform the nature of the workforce snapshot tool recommended. Key findings from the four reports are used to inform the recommendations, which relate to the four themes of the Industry Strategy Workforce Plan.

2. Future State

In 2026.....

- Community services is the industry of choice for job seekers. It combines good pay, conditions and career opportunities with a strong values base.
- The industry's workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves, and engages effectively and routinely with community groups and service users in the design, development, delivery and review of services.
- Those communities lead development of local assets to reduce deprivation, exclusion and inequality.
- Community services workplaces are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is an expanded and skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce across mainstream services and community-controlled organisations.
- Workers are skilled in specialist areas, highly capable in team-based work with other agencies and across the service system, and routinely participate in communities of practice. They deliver quality services where outcomes are routinely measured.
- Volunteers are considered as an integral part of the workforce, and recruited, supported and developed accordingly.
- People with lived experience are encouraged and well-supported as members of community service workforce. Peer-led services are highly valued.
- Community organisations' boards and committees have strong governance, and share their practices through a vibrant local network.
- Workforce planning is recognised as a core capability, and routinely practised at both agency and industry levels.
- The industry has embraced digital innovation, including linked up IT systems to enhance data sharing and client servicing.
- The industry and ACT Government agencies design and deliver joint professional development opportunities for their staff.
- The industry speaks with one voice, and partners effectively with education and training authorities and other key stakeholders. Peak bodies routinely collaborate on leadership development.

3. Community Needs Analysis, Current and Future Workforce, and Proposed Snapshot Tool – overview

“Where agencies plan ahead at all, they tend to focus on anticipated increases in raw demand for current service types. But the nature of the services demanded, and the way they are provided, is going to change; is already changing. Organisations that don’t get that will not survive.”

This section summarises the material detailed in reports at Attachments A – D.

Community Needs

The ACT today has a relatively young population profile. The annual population growth is 1.6%, with aged cohorts growing fastest. Canberra’s ageing population will require a variety of services. There is also high labour force participation of women with children, which feeds demand for early childhood services. Over the next few years it is likely we will see:

- more people – especially those who are aged or with disabilities - needing assistance with core activities
- increased aged dependency ratios
- a rapid growth in the population who identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; from 1.3% in 2006 to 2.4% by 2026 – the fastest growth of any jurisdiction
- more people taking on informal caring roles, which could have an impact on labour force participation rates
- service users and communities with more complex needs
- higher expectations from service users about how services are provided; including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people requiring that services uphold cultural rights and practise respectful engagement, baby boomers requiring services more tailored to their needs, and services delivered to and with communities.

ACT community services demand includes the SE NSW region to some extent, particularly for health-related services, and a number of community services agencies have contracts with the NSW Government. With Canberra as the hub of the Capital Region, this looks set to continue.

While the ACT appears to be performing better than average on a number of social indicators, it is important to look beyond averages. For instance, while the unemployment rate is the nation’s lowest, for those dependent on welfare payments – most often women and children - the high cost of living in the ACT makes life very difficult. Some community services workers could be considered as part of the working poor, given the relatively low wages in some sectors.

It is difficult to predict changes in the extent and impact of disadvantage and inequality, as so much depends on economic circumstances, and government policy which is mostly set by the Commonwealth Government.

Community need is not the same as service demand. Several informants noted the difficulty in measuring unmet demand, particularly where people are not comfortable with or easily able to access the service system.

We are seeing supply-led demand in some areas, particularly where services are broadening their focus, and becoming less stigmatized, for example the recent moves to create a more cohesive and accessible service system to respond to domestic and family violence. A push for trauma-informed care is, anecdotally, beginning to unearth a greater prevalence of trauma that clients may not have been prepared to reveal previously. A steadily increasing demand for counselling services was noted by several agencies.

More need is likely to emerge in areas that don't fit standard program guidelines, for example mental illness outside NDIS, and older women's homelessness.

"Everyone knows us as a men's and boys' service. But we are seeing increasing needs from young women and girls."

Current Workforce

While there are a number of ways to count the community service industry workforce, as indicated in the Industry Strategy, a reasonable estimate was around 8,000 people in 2016, and has increased rapidly since then. They are predominantly female and older than in other industries. 37% had attained a Bachelor degree or above.

Recent trends suggest a drop in the workforce's median age, mainly due to high growth in areas such as disability and aged care, which are bringing in younger workers.

Around half of all employees were employed in a full-time basis. The remainder are part-time or casual. There is little information on the level of underemployment within the industry, ie workers would like more hours.

The largest sectors within the industry in 2016 were [using the ABS categories] Child Care Services, Social Assistance Services and Aged Care Services. Disability is covered under Social Assistance Services, and has seen a very rapid growth area over the past few years.

Employment arrangements vary widely, according to industrial awards and sectors, national regulatory frameworks [or lack of], position, and employing organisation. There is a general perception of low pay, poor career opportunities, and competition from the Commonwealth and ACT public services. On the other hand, the values base for community services work, and workplace flexibility, were seen as strong advantages.

Future Workforce

For future community services workforce supply, these factors will be critical over the next few years:

- Likely very high demand for aged care services, both residential and home-based
- Continuing high demand for NDIS/disability services, although tapering off over time
- Potentially higher demand for early childhood education and care, as government policies move towards universal access
- More demand for younger workers as overall growth continues, and ageing workers retire, with the median age decreasing across the industry

- Increased rates of higher education, but with potential shortages of people undertaking VET courses for industry vacancies e.g. in early childhood education – unless there are significant changes in industrial context
- Reduction of low-skilled job opportunities, but continued low pay and high turnover in key sectors without significant industrial reforms, e.g. early childhood education and care
- Impact of continuing workforce casualisation and underemployment in some sectors

Agencies with a primary focus in one sector will increasingly be required to operate in an integrated way across the industry, and with government providers, to better assist clients with more complex needs (1). This has implications for collaborative practice, and will be a key area for capability development, discussed in Section 4.2. This applies as much to specialist services such as alcohol and other drugs treatment and rehabilitation, as to universal services such as early childhood education and care.

“Our early childhood centre parents are more and more raising things with our staff that go beyond their children’s education and care. From mental health to domestic violence to affordable housing. Seems universal services like ours will need to become skilled gateways for the broader system.”

“Some policy trends are driving us to more individualized services, like NDIS. But what works well for many people are the community networks.”

“We will need to get much better across the industry at joined up approaches. Could mean we don’t really have a shortage of services now, just a shortage of effective ones.”

Potentially the most significant change in the way “need” is determined in future will be the active involvement of clients and communities. This goes beyond services just being more ‘person-centred’ in their delivery. Rather than being passive recipients of pre-ordained programs with set guidelines, people will become more actively engaged – and potentially equal partners - in designing, prioritising, delivering and monitoring how services and programs work (2).

This reflects what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has been advocating for many years, in line with the “nothing about us without us” principle (3).

As the environment changes, successful organisations will need to get ahead of these trends, and plan for changes in community needs, particularly in areas such as aged care, where change is likely to be transformational (4). As discussed in Section 4.1, most are not doing so in a systematic way, and there is scope for industry leadership bodies to play a stronger role.

There are a number of clear challenges within the community services industry – locally and nationally – that will need to be faced in developing a fit-for-purpose future workforce. They can be summarised as:

- Leadership effectiveness gaps
- Suboptimal workforce planning
- High turnover, particularly in lower paid and more casualised sectors/occupations
- Professional development

These factors are discussed in detail in Sections 4.1 - 4.4.

Snapshot Tool

In the course of this project, it became apparent that there are some significant gaps in the data available about the community services workforce. For instance, as above there is currently no measure of the level of underemployment, which is a critical issue at times of labour shortage.

Four of the current tools are compared on a range of criteria. These are the Australian Bureau of Statistics *Census of Population and Housing*, ACT Long Service Leave Authority *Industry Workforce Analysis*, Australian Charities and Nonprofit Commission data from the *Annual Information Statements* of registered charities, and the 2016 *State of the Community Services Sector Report* [hereafter “*State of the Sector*”].

We recommend that the snapshot study method be a census, adapted with capacity for qualitative responses, and that the study tools consist of three separate census forms, one for paid workers, one for unpaid volunteers and one for organisations.

The *State of the Sector* Report was seen by many in the industry as very useful as it allowed for qualitative responses on a range of matters. However, the survey had limited responses, and was targeted at organisations and so predominantly answered by executive level staff. We believe it would be valuable to ensure the proposed new survey tool covers the three separate target populations.

A survey tool directed at non-executive staff would allow for a broader range of views on matters such as work conditions and intentions to remain or leave. Given the likely increased importance of volunteers for the industry in the future, and the lack of ACT data, we also propose this as a critical gap to be filled. As flagged in the Snapshot Tool Report at Attachment D, further testing would be desirable to refine the proposed instruments.

4. Findings and Recommendations

Introduction

As a starting point, Insight used the themes from the Industry Strategy's Workforce Plan, with some modifications as suggested through the course of the project. The Plan's themes are:

1. Cultivate leadership and succession planning
2. Strengthen capability and career development
3. Improve retention of the current workforce
4. Grow the workforce to meet current and future needs

Consultations suggested the need for some additions and a slight change of emphasis, as indicated with the words in italics:

1. Cultivate *industry and agency* leadership, *identity, and workforce planning*
2. Strengthen capability and *workforce readiness*
3. Improve *attraction* and retention of the workforce
4. Grow the workforce to meet current and future needs

This highlights the need for a stronger emphasis on industry leadership, a more strategic approach to workforce development, and inclusion of attraction as a key consideration. We recommend that these changes also be considered in any review of the Industry Strategy and Workforce Plan.

Through the consultations, we found that board and committee members and senior managers were often preoccupied with organizational level matters. With prompting, many discussed sectoral issues, but few gave much consideration to workforce matters with an industry-wide focus, let alone the broader human services system. An explicit revamp of the Workforce Plan themes could help broaden their view, and create greater collective commitment to the industry's future.

Recommendation 1

ISSG to consider amendments to the guiding themes of the Industry Strategy's Workforce Plan, as follows:

1. **Cultivate industry and agency leadership, identity, and workforce planning**
2. **Strengthen capability and workforce readiness**
3. **Improve attraction and retention of the workforce**
4. **Grow the workforce to meet current and future needs**

4.1 Cultivate industry and agency leadership, identity, and workforce planning

The ACT Community Services Industry Strategy's purpose includes:

"present a strong case for the value of the industry as a contributor to the health and wellbeing of the people in the ACT and a significant contributor to the ACT economy, which will deepen the understanding of the community services within and outside the industry." (5)

It sets a 10-year vision, with priority areas for achievement. These include improving the profile of the industry and demonstrating its worth to those outside the industry through marketing campaigns (6), and under the Workforce Plan, a communications strategy (7).

However, what became clear through consultations is that there is a big internal marketing job to do. One of the questions put to all informants was: *“To what extent do you see your organization as part of a broad community services industry, or just as part of a sub-sector?”* One notable response was typical of those received during the consultations, including from senior leaders in ACT community services:

“Industry is not a word I use, and I rarely hear it from others in ACT community services”

This is not something unique to the ACT industry. The need to work on ‘buy-in’ is explicitly recognised in the introduction to the 2018 Victorian Community Services Industry Plan:

“The industry will need to embrace the vision, principles and strategic directions identified in the industry plan, incorporating them into planning, development and decision-making.” (8)

There is an awareness by the Victorian industry that active efforts are required to engage people within it, as well as external groups such as potential new recruits.

If people identified as industry leaders are not strongly behind the concept, the chances for achieving the outcomes in the Workforce Plan – and the Industry Strategy - are reduced. So a stronger focus on leaders and senior managers as industry advocates is critical.

For the minority who stated a strong commitment to furthering an ACT community services industry, there is a sense of frustration that there is not a broader effort underway:

“ACTCOSS is taking a lead as coordinator for industry development, but only some other peak bodies appear interested.”

“Where things are happening, it tends to be opportunistic, not strategic. Not much ‘systems change’ thinking going on.”

“Most agencies don’t tend to look much beyond their sub-sector. Direct service delivery agencies tend to have much less of a sense of the whole industry. Agencies and peaks across the industry need to work more closely together on common concerns.”

“The Industry Strategy is a useful document, but staff below senior levels are just not engaged. Not obvious how it affects them.”

It is important to stress that the slower than hoped for progress on a strong industry identity is not driven by a lack of commitment to the Industry Strategy’s purpose, or any inherent unwillingness to work collectively. Rather it is largely structural factors that relegate industry identity to a second order priority for most, because of:

- 1) an unusually complex operating environment for a single industry
- 2) the fact that many if not most agencies consider that they are in survival mode
- 3) changes in the industry that are potentially devaluing local connections
- 4) the limited data available on the industry and its workforce
- 5) the need to improve corporate governance and leadership capability at both organizational and industry levels

These constraints are outlined below. These need to be acknowledged and addressed in meaningful ways, to optimise take-up of the Industry Strategy and Workforce Plan, and enable a successful industry.

1) **A complex operating environment**

As an industry, community services is much more diverse than most, and arguably becoming more so. For-profit providers are increasingly joining the same markets and funding pools as traditional non-profits. The distinction between them is becoming fuzzier. Non-profits are increasingly needing to generate financial surpluses, and market exposure is making this difficult, particularly for smaller providers who lack economies of scale and back-office efficiencies.

There is a broad range of policy, funding, industrial and regulatory arrangements. This becomes starkly apparent for some of the larger agencies who manage – often simultaneously – fee-for-service NDIS, aged care and early childhood services, and block-funded community development, mental health or housing programs. The complexities within the industry emerged as a strong theme of the interviews and focus groups. Common observations included:

- a) Some programs/funding streams have national quality standards ranging from highly prescriptive to good practice guidance [e.g. Early Childhood Education and Care National Quality Framework, aged care standards] and others have little or none.
- b) Some fee-for-service delivery is constrained by rigid price schedules [e.g. NDIS], while others have a relatively open market [Early Childhood Education and Care].
- c) Wage rates are generally seen as inadequate and uncompetitive, apart perhaps from professional streams such as allied health. This is exacerbated by increased casualisation and deskilling in some areas. Aspects of aged care and NDIS were described by some as like the gig economy: *“We are seeing the uberization of home care”* (9).
- d) Funding arrangements for ACT agencies are set by both the Commonwealth and by ACT Government, and neither has yet managed a consistent whole-of-government approach across its own jurisdiction, let alone between governments.
- e) Some sectors are operating increasingly closely together [e.g. Youth Services and Family Services], and others are more self-contained within the industry, but have increasingly strong service links with government providers [alcohol and other drug, women’s services].
- f) Some non-peak agencies combine advocacy with service delivery, but are not always clear about how best to define advocacy, and the extent to which it is sanctioned by contractual requirements.

2) **“Survival Mode”**

“Our board has been preoccupied with survival, and staff cannot be employed long-term. Planning seems like a luxury.”

The complexities outlined above have been exacerbated by an environment of greater uncertainty and ‘short-termism’. This is marked by rapid and sometimes unpredictable policy changes, markets opening to diverse new entrants, tightening margins, and block-funding arrangements which still rarely go beyond three years, and in many cases contract terms remaining at 12 months.

The Industry Strategy noted a high level of uncertainty about the future, especially concerning regulation, funding and reform (10). There were largely negative views of ACT Government funding arrangements expressed in the *State of the Sector Report 2016*, although not as negative as for the Commonwealth (11). This was reflected in Insight's consultations:

"It is very difficult to forecast community needs and workforce requirements for our own agency, let alone think about the industry, when we don't know where we will be in even a couple of years. Hard to plan in such an unpredictable environment".

"We are in survival mode - just hanging on from one budget to the next."

"Funding and pricing do not always meet the full cost of providing services".

"Our role and constituency as a peak body has radically changed due to massive policy shifts."

"NDIS is an example where the nature of services that can be provided has changed radically and quickly, with new policy, price settings, and business model. Big problem for workforce planning is how to predict these changes. Governments need to provide greater long-term certainty."

Accordingly, many agencies and some peak bodies are tending to default to a focus on internal organizational matters, or sub-sector priorities at best, as agencies struggle to stay afloat.

There are hopeful cross-sector initiatives underway, some of which are supported by the ACT Government, such as the Workforce Impact Collective (WIC) through National Disability Services. However, given the difficult operating environment, some see that:

"their good efforts will struggle to gain traction, given the structural, policy and funding issues with NDIS."

This environment also reduces capacity to push for broader industry development and service investment, and for the Industry Strategy's focus on the needs of clients, community development and creating more connected communities. An informant from a consumer group observed:

"Peaks focus on their members and their sector, as they should, but the role of consumers and civil society, and empowered citizens, is sometimes forgotten."

Informants noted that there had been a number of community sector reform initiatives over the last few years, but achievements to date had been limited. Some fairly simple administrative reforms in funding processes have yet to gain whole-of-government traction.

"We went through a 'red tape reduction' process a few years ago, but there still seems to be plenty of it."

Given the changes in market conditions, funding arrangements and ACT and Commonwealth Government policy – such as the move to commissioning for outcomes – it would be timely to revisit such matters. This should include procurement processes, regulatory frameworks, contracting and reporting requirements. It should be done in a whole-of-government manner, with major input from consumers and industry services providers. Where possible, the ACT Government should also seek to influence the Commonwealth and aim for national consistency.

3) Local connections

“Some large agencies in Canberra are effectively ACT branches of national organizations. They are taking their cues from head office, which may be in Sydney or Melbourne or Brisbane. Their contribution to local issues – through collaborative advocacy and industry development – varies a lot between agencies. Some are great, and work collaboratively with us. Others play little or no part in local issues.”

“Many sector peak bodies relate strongly to their counterparts interstate and are part of a national network. This can be very helpful in driving nationally-agreed policy positions in these speciality areas. But it sometimes means a lack of focus on local industry-wide matters.”

Other jurisdictions have found some difficulty in negotiating these local versus national pressures, and this was acknowledged in the development of both the Queensland and Victorian Industry Strategies. Arguably, it is even more difficult for a smaller jurisdiction like the ACT.

However, this is not a zero-sum game. With determined industry leadership and the right incentives from government, national perspectives can inform and strengthen the local industry.

The ACT Government could also consider clarifying whether fostering local knowledge and capability is an important policy consideration to be enacted through procurement. A number of informants supported this view:

“Perhaps ‘connection to local community’ should be a seriously-applied procurement criterion. This would not be intended to shut out interstate or national providers, but to ensure that any potential provider understood local community issues and had the necessary networks to collaborative effectively.”

“If we are serious about ‘placed-based approaches’ as the way forward, community connections have to be given proper weight by ACT Government when they develop policy and run a tender.”

Recommendation 2

With oversight by the ISSG/JCGRG, and in partnership with consumers and the industry, ACT Government should work on policy and funding reform aimed at:

- a) consistency across all ACT Government agencies on any proposed changes, such as commissioning for outcomes**
- b) procurement process that enables clear demonstration and assessment of the true cost of service delivery, including workforce attraction, retention and development**
- c) an emphasis on local community connections and collaborative practice**
- d) long-term funding as the default as far as possible, subject to sensible risk management**
- e) opportunities to influence the Commonwealth to drive consistency across jurisdictions.**

4) Workforce Data Limitations

There is some useful workforce analysis happening at peak body level, such as the *Workforce Qualification and Remuneration* profile conducted by ATODA every three years, the CYFSP workforce survey, and the annual NDS *State of the Disability Sector Report*.

It should be noted that all these tools are essentially a snapshot of part of the current workforce. They can be a basis for future planning work, but there is little evidence that they have been so used to date.

At the whole-of-industry level, the most notable local effort to date is the *Sector of the Sector Report* 2016, which is discussed in more detail in Attachment D.

5) Corporate Governance and Leadership Capability

It became apparent during interviews that the skills and attributes of boards and committees need particular attention. This is needed to enhance the leadership for agency-level workforce planning, and broader industry development. No less important is how the industry as a whole is governed, through the various mechanisms that now exist.

Broader issues of workforce capability – including at governance level - are discussed in section 4.2.

At organisational level

The Industry Strategy refers to the need to enhance board skills and capabilities for strategic planning, financial management and corporate governance (12). Respondent feedback suggests that there may be some deficits in these areas, and that a significant number of ACT boards and committees may not be prepared for the transformative change ahead.

Corporate governance and workforce planning are increasingly recognized as critical for managing rapid change in a complex environment, and enhancing business value (13). During Insight's discussions with board and committee members, this was sometimes acknowledged as important in principle, but it seems a minority of governing bodies are actively assessing the effectiveness of their governance, and most are essentially just 'muddling through'.

This is not something peculiar to the ACT industry. The national Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce reported that workforce planning is a major capability gap broadly across that sector, and there is a need to develop workforce planning competencies for boards and senior staff (14). Similar observations have been made about the disability sector nationally by the industry itself (15).

One large agency has partnered with a private consultancy company who are providing 'low bono' assistance to develop a *Capability and Workforce Development Plan*. This is very much the exception. For the vast majority, where workforce planning happens at all, it is short-term at best:

"We have a strategic plan, but it doesn't say anything much about workforce. Not sure we would know where to start."

"There is a demographer on our board, which helps a bit with planning, but we still find we are most often reactive given the uncertain environment."

This is reflected in the literature. It is often noted that community services workforce development and planning often has a surprisingly low profile, even in areas undergoing transformational change such as NDIS and aged care (16). NDS has identified workforce planning as a key business capability area in need of improvement (17).

There appears to be a broader issue with the quality of leadership and management capability that underpins inadequate planning for future workforce needs. This becomes apparent when things go wrong, but is not routinely prioritized as an area for capability development:

“Leadership and management skills are not sufficiently recognized and supported in community services. Because these agencies provide people services, they think that automatically makes them good people managers”

“As a small agency, it is tricky to balance a focus on management and service delivery.”

“The committee is a group of skilled and well-intentioned individuals, but they don’t really operate well collectively.”

“There is a failure of governance and leadership in many agencies. The basics are often not covered. So when combined with policy and funding uncertainty, it is not surprising that planning is rarely done well.

“We know of a number of local situations where boards didn’t know what they didn’t know. Or didn’t understand that their responsibility was to ask the right questions. Agencies have gotten into trouble due to over-reliance on, or poor relationships with, an underperforming CEO.”

In considering risk management, it is unusual for ACT community services agencies to identify the failure to recruit and retain a suitably skilled and capable staff team. Even fewer have concrete plans to address this. Where risk management plans exist, any mention of workforce tends to be cursory, and focused on a possible immediate need [for example; “CEO resigns unexpectedly”] rather than structural risks.

“Boards need to get much better at managing risk, including their own risks around skills and performance as a governing body.”

There are quite a number of tools available to boards and committees to promote and assess good governance, identify workforce planning needs and manage risk. These include through ACTCOSS and the other local and national peaks, or at a cost through bodies like the Australian Institute of Company Directors, which is increasingly focusing on the community service industry (18). It appears that only a few of the larger and/or more well-resourced agencies use any of these resources routinely.

A particularly promising initiative is the Leading Social Change Board Network, through ACTCOSS, which offers an opportunity for volunteer board members to build connections and share knowledge across the ACT community services industry. This is essentially a peer support network which enables learning about other organizations’ practice and policies in a safe environment.

Insight based a focus group around a meeting of this network. Participants noted that as board and committee members tend to have little interaction across agencies, the network could be a very useful initiative to help build industry identity, as well as drive innovation and quality improvement.

At time of writing, ACTCOSS is planning to launch the Common Core Assessment Tool, which will provide a simple, effective and consistent way for governance bodies to review and improve their practice.

Recommendation 3

ISSG to encourage ACT community services agencies to review their governance policies, procedures and performance to ensure they have strong leadership capability to plan and develop their future workforce.

Recommendation 4

ISSG to encourage boards and committees to work more collaboratively to share expertise and resources, to both improve organizational performance, and to assist collective efforts to achieve the vision of the Industry Strategy. Tools to achieve this include:

- **Active participation in the Leading Social Change Board Network**
- **use of the Common Core Assessment Tool**

At industry level

There was considerable commentary on the roles and effectiveness of peak bodies, the Peaks Forum, Joint Community Government Reference Group, and Industry Strategy Steering Group. While there were mixed views about their effectiveness, most informants saw the need for such bodies as important mechanisms to advocate and plan for the necessary system change that will underpin a thriving industry. The lack of funding/resources to develop and implement strategy was seen as an impediment.

There were some comments about industry governance ‘architecture’, but most ideas were about capability and culture, not structures.

“There is no obvious body to take long-term carriage of the Industry Strategy on behalf of the industry. Shouldn’t it be the Peaks Forum? They could then have more direct input to the Industry Strategy Steering Group, and ultimately JCGRG”

“The impact of Peaks Forum waxes and wanes. Too much seems to depend on who the individuals are at the table, rather than any long-term strategic agenda. Some peaks don’t seem to want to play at all.”

“The ACT Government perceives there is not a lot of unity across the industry, with sub-sector positions at best. But we also have to acknowledge that we in government have been very poor at doing the ‘whole-of-government’ thing.”

Some comments did go to structure, and most radically:

“If the future of community services is a much more person-centred approach, why have sector peaks at all? That keeps the focus on service streams and professions, rather than where it should be; service users and community.”

Many informants saw potential for stronger alliances between peak bodies on workforce matters. This has been recognised in other jurisdictions and reform contexts, including building links across related sectors to better focus on new job design to meet emerging consumer needs (19), avoiding silos and unproductive competition for example between aged care and NDIS providers (20). The Victorian

Industry Strategy recognizes that peak bodies have an important role to play in supporting the industry through change processes (21).

A strong theme emerging from the consultations was the need for stronger partnerships between all players, to advance industry and workforce issues at strategic levels. This is not new, and indeed a number of informants expressed frustration that similar issues had been raised over several years, but with only limited progress. Our attention was drawn to this comment from the 2016 *State of the Service Report*:

“Community organisations need to be routinely recognised and engaged as partners in the policy process, not just service delivery. ACT Government agencies need to work better and present a real ‘one ACT Government’ approach. Have been talking about this for years, but progress is painfully slow.” (p.2)

Through the consultations, one area in particular emerged where the industry could take the initiative to significantly improve its engagement; with CIT, ACT schools and colleges, and the broader education and training sector. This would help address targeting and quality of course for an emerging workforce, assist with gaining new recruits to the industry, and even joint research priorities. This is dealt with in detail in Section 5.3 on Attraction and Retention.

If stakeholders are open to innovative ideas for industry and system architecture, one model worthy of consideration is the Victorian Future Social Services Institute, which is a collaboration commenced in 2018 between VCOSS, the Victorian Government, and RMIT University:

<http://www.futuresocial.org/> (22)

This model may be ambitious for a small jurisdiction. That said, the concept of a partnership between the industry, ACT Government and a tertiary research body to advance the industry was seen as having merit in principle by informants. It could help drive a stronger industry identity, as well as practical matters like routine data collection.

At time of writing, ISSG is planning its work program. It would be desirable to ensure that this included such strategic matters, for consideration by JCGRG.

Recommendation 5

ISSG should consider a range of matters to improve the context for implementation of the Community Services Industry Strategy and its associated Workforce Plan, including:

- a) strengthening and streamlining industry architecture, including resourcing**
- b) a whole-of-government policy, procurement and funding review for the industry (as per Rec 2)**
- c) an assessment of the effectiveness of ISSG to date, including**
 - o links with peak bodies, Peaks Forum and JCGRG**
 - o consideration of any adjustments needed to membership, to ensure the effective participation of all key parties**
- d) development of a practical workplan and/or priorities for the next 12 months and beyond, including in particular;**

- **strategies encouraging active engagement of stakeholders to drive a more clearly articulated, high profile and relevant industry identity, both within the industry and externally.**

4.2 Strengthen capability and workforce readiness

The Industry Strategy noted a rapidly changing environment for community services where the business and norms of government, for-profit and not-for-profit sectors were converging. The combination of new models of service delivery to meet emerging community needs, and policy and service reforms aimed at improving outcomes, will require a workforce that is increasingly focused on:

- more client-centred services, including working in partnership with consumers to design, deliver and monitor services
- a broader focus on community development
- the ability to operate in a marketised environment, with funding decisions more directly in the hands of service users, and stronger business management skills are needed
- greater focus on holistic approaches and integrated services to meet community needs, and
- ability to work effectively with groups experiencing disproportionate levels of disadvantage.

Those consulted for this project indicated a broad understanding of these trends, and a willingness to embrace them in thinking about future workforce needs. However as noted in Section 4.1 there are a number of impediments to turning this awareness into systematic action.

Common themes emerged regarding the nature of the emerging workforce:

- a) attitudes that are less about 'helping' and more about **empowering** and working with communities
- b) basic **business acumen** at all levels; rostering, financial literacy, project planning and management, compliance with quality standards
- c) skills aligned to **common practice frameworks**
- d) more peer-based and **lived experience workers**
- e) a workforce that better **reflects the community it serves**; including younger workers, a higher proportion of men, and more volunteers
- f) staff in universal services having the skills to enable **earlier support**
- g) greater focus on **achieving client/community outcomes**, with attendant functional measurement and evaluation skills
- h) in advocacy agencies, a better understanding of, and the **ability to influence policy and funding processes**

To get to this future state, it was widely recognised that a number of current issues need to be better addressed through a workforce that has the diversity and capabilities needed to best represent and serve its community.

Mainstream agencies generally acknowledged that they had not had good results with **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce** support and development. While intent is often expressed through the prevalence of Reconciliation Action Plans, it seems that few mainstream agencies are on track to achieving their targets. This was confirmed by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organizations who perceived a lack of cultural competency in all but a handful of mainstream community services, and had a similar critique about many government services.

“We’ve had three RAPs to date, but not much progress on recruiting Indigenous staff.”

“Some mainstream agencies are great, but I can count them on one hand.”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander informants suggested that cultural awareness training needed to be of high quality, including covering competency and safety rather than just awareness, and include input from the local community.

There are some industry-wide strategies available to assist, for instance through the ACTCOSS Gulanga Program, but there appears to have been limited take-up. A number of mainstream agencies indicated current willingness or previous attempts at partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organizations, but with only partial success.

It may be useful to develop a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination as a strategic driver for the ACT Industry Plan and Workforce Plan, as set out in the Victorian Plan (23), and in line with the guiding principle of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement and the Community Services Directorate Strategic Plan 2018-28.

Recommendation 6

ISSG to consider including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination as a priority in any review of the Industry Strategy and Workforce Plan

Volunteers are already a significant part of the local workforce, with Volunteering and Contact ACT reporting that 70% of agencies have at least some volunteers, including on boards and committees. Some informants suggested that volunteers could become increasingly important to service delivery as budgets tighten.

However, there are wide differences in how they are engaged. Only a small number of agencies have strong volunteer induction, management, support and training, with volunteers integrated into the staff team. Some effective programs are almost entirely structured around volunteers, such as mentoring.

As noted in the *State of the Sector Report*, such agencies are more likely to have a position identified as volunteer coordinator.

“In agencies with no volunteer coordinator, in theory it means everyone is responsible. But in practice it means no-one is.”

In many agencies, senior management regards engaging volunteers as difficult, and believes it takes time and effort away from core business. This was not just about smaller agencies with stretched resources, as there was high variability in how larger agencies engaged volunteers.

Volunteers are a potentially large but largely untapped workforce resource. In line with the *ACT Volunteering Statement Action Plan 2018-21*, effort needs to be directed to ensuring volunteers a better supported, so they can more effectively contribute to the industry:

“Volunteers are included in the life of organisations and have clear roles

“Organisations are committed to best practice in volunteer management, provide appropriate training and support and take pride in the role of volunteers.”

Recommendation 7

ISSG, in collaboration with Volunteering and Contact ACT, to promulgate good practice on engagement, support and use of volunteers.

There are several notable examples of **workers with lived experience** strengthening the capability of their organisations, as staff and on governance bodies. Explicit development of a peer-based workforce tends to be limited to specialist areas such as HIV/AIDS, mental health, disability, and alcohol and other drugs. However, it appears that senior managers across the industry are increasingly seeing the value of an overt connection between the backgrounds of staff, and their capability to build trust and rapport with clients and communities.

“Lived experience drives this agency, starting with the board.”

There is also a growing evidence base confirming that “Peer-led and peer-based services can more easily adapt to suit specific social contexts and meet niche community needs.” (24)

The consensus view from consumers and carers was that workers with lived experience would bring greater empathy and understanding to their work, and client/community interactions:

“Workers with lived experience are more likely to treat you as a whole person, not a presenting problem, and work with us rather than do to us.”

Almost all agencies consulted understood the need to effectively support lived experience staff regarding professional boundaries, the risk of co-dependency, and vicarious trauma, through sound management practices, professional or clinical supervision, and active support for self-care.

Several front-line staff noted that agencies often employ workers with lived experience without realising they have done so. It requires skilled management and trust before people may be willing to disclose.

Recommendation 8

ISSG and peak bodies to disseminate good practice on employing workers with lived experience and peer-led services.

Professional development underpins efforts to transform or even maintain staff capabilities, and was the issue most often raised through the consultations. The general view is that while professional development in all its forms is critical for high quality service delivery and retaining staff, industry capacity to invest is often limited. This is also reflected in the literature (25).

Early childhood education and care is one area where former Commonwealth-funded professional development programs have lapsed, putting extra pressure on the sector (26). Particularly for agencies exposed to NDIS, margins have been cut and pricing arrangements leave little room for professional development. At one extreme:

“We have to choose between training and service delivery”.

This has implications not just for service quality, but has been raised as risk to client safety (27)

A minority of organisations ensured that professional development was routinely recognized in their annual budget, including costs for backfilling if staff were absent. However, for many it seems to be a discretionary item that is becoming harder to fund.

Some informants lamented the lack of systemic approach to professional development costs across ACT Government or the industry, and in some cases believed that government funders would either not accept professional development as part of a tender bid, or would favour bids based on a lower cost.

In conversations with Insight, ACT Government senior officials rejected any such suggestion. They noted that for any procurement process, properly funded professional development would be assessed as part of the cost of running a service, and contributing to quality, hence 'value-for-money'. The fact that there is, at least, confusion within the industry suggests the need for whole-of-government and industry-wide position. An early win from this project could be a clear agreement between ACT Government and the industry about professional development funding and costing expectations.

The nature and quality of much on-the-job professional development appears to be ad hoc and individualized. Options are most often discussed as part of individual work planning and career development, but not so often at agency level, although this is starting to change.

Many of the impediments to high quality, future-focused and cross-industry professional development are the structural factors identified in Section 4.1. Recommendation 2 relating to policy and funding reform is applicable here.

A further suggestion worthy of consideration is the development of a portable training entitlement system or 'training passport' to enhance the value of professional development and enable qualifications and learnings to be readily transferred and recognised, as employees move within the industry. This has been put forward for disability services nationally, but could also be usefully applied to a region, such as the ACT (28)

Recommendation 9

ACT Government to clarify its approach to professional development through human services procurement processes

Recommendation 10

ISSG to consider the applicability of a portable training entitlement system across the industry.

Peak bodies are playing a strong role in developing and offering professional development that is targeted to workforce needs. There are also a few examples of attempted joined up professional development opportunities through sub-sector peaks, or between industry and government, such as:

- Family Violence Hub
- Workforce Impact Collective (NDS)
- Trauma-informed care and practice (ACT Women's Health Service, specialist homelessness services, CYFSP, Out of Home Care)

Notably, such initiatives have at least a sub-text of system reform, as well as enhancing skills. However, they are still regarded as “pockets of good practice” rather than the norm. They sometimes involve both community sector and government service delivery staff, but joint professional development opportunities remain rare, despite the potential benefits.

“Training together is a cost-effective way to change systems and culture”.

“An holistic approach to skills development across the community services industry will have significant benefits to the disability support workforce, particularly those whose work crossover into other mainstream community services” (29)

A number of informants expressed the desire to go beyond joint training, and enable temporary secondments and job swaps between industry and ACT Government agencies. This has happened on rare occasions, but never in any systematic way. It was acknowledged that there may be some industrial issues to work through, but it was considered these could be resolved.

A related question is whether ACT Government service delivery staff should be considered as part of the industry, given the move to more joined-up ways of working for common clients, regardless of employer.

There is also scope for greater involvement of current or potential service users in professional development, given the highly useful perspectives they can bring. This is occurring to some extent in sectors with organized consumer groups and agencies with a strong focus on staff with lived experience – particularly the health sector. This will need to become standard practice if the industry is to embrace co-production.

Recommendation 11

ISSG to develop ways to plan system-wide professional development, including opportunities for industry and government staff to train together and experience secondments or job swaps, and the involvement of consumers and community members.

Education and Training Sector

In considering formal, accredited professional development, a number of community services agencies and some peak bodies have developed productive links with various educational institutions for student placements and advice on course content and quality. However, these are most often opportunistic, not strategic, and usually depend on the relationships developed between individuals.

“We had a great relationship with the ACU Social Work Department. We had regular student placements that also delivered some practical action research projects. And sometimes it turned into recruitment opportunities. But then their contact person changed and our CEO changed and it all stopped.”

The picture is further complicated by the existence of RTOs operated by some of the larger community service agencies, and the fact that some peak bodies see a key part of their role [as per funding agreements] as providing non-accredited training for their sector. In at least one case, a peak body has contracted with an interstate RTO due to a perception that the course quality and flexibility provided by CIT was not satisfactory.

“CIT’s highly subsidized courses should make us more competitive. We seek feedback on how well our courses match industry needs, but rarely get much.”

“Seems to be poor understanding in the industry of VET products. There is more flexibility to meet employers’ needs than they realize.”

“Clear that there is a need to jointly plan for future needs, e.g. Diploma rather than Cert 4 is becoming the baseline qualification in some areas.”

“There is generally little quality assurance for private RTOs. And interstate training providers are not going to really understand local needs.”

The perspective of the ACT State Training Authority (aka Skills Canberra) was set out through the ACT Government submission to the Assembly Inquiry in the NDIS, and suggested the desirability of a closer working relationship between the NDIS and VET sectors. It noted that “NDIS service providers are underutilising the currently available VET products and services to address skills shortages” and highlighted issues such as poor use of traineeships (30).

Skills Canberra acknowledges that student placements and traineeships are used sporadically, can be difficult for some community services agencies to take on, and have costs. They have indicated strong willingness to work with the industry to resolve these matters, including considering new more cost-effective models.

There is currently little at industry level that might enable a constructive, organized airing of these issues, and support strategic reforms to benefit all parties. Yet through the consultations it was broadly agreed that there should be:

“There are no formal structures to help plan workforce educational needs across the ACT industry. We used to have the Industry Training Advisory Boards [ITAB], which were useful.”

“The industry in partnership with ACT Government should be in a position to leverage better tailored, higher quality courses from CIT. But that requires some systematic thinking and planning about what those education and training needs will be.”

“Maybe there could be a special unit or function within Skills Canberra or maybe ACTCOSS, that did workforce planning for the community services industry.”

“CIT has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee that could assist the training planning process for mainstream services.”

An ITAB-like body could also consider some of the anomalies across the industry, and how best to handle them. For instance, early childhood education and care [ECEC] now has mandated qualification requirements tied to the National Quality Framework. Other areas such as disability have large parts of the workforce with no minimum qualifications required.

“For the industry broadly to get the status it needs for professionalism and quality delivery, it will need a mandated skills base, as per ECEC, aligned nationally as far as possible.”

Some of these matters will need to be resolved at the national level, and indeed ACT reforms will need to be developed with a careful eye to national processes underway, such as through the Australian Industry and Skills Committee and its relevant Industry Reference Committees (Aged Care, Disability Services, Children’s Education and Care, Community Sector and Development). The Assembly Inquiry into the NDIS has recommended the development of a funding strategy for service provider workforce development, in partnership with the COAG Disability Reform Council (31).

An ACT body with all the key players could wield some clout in influencing those agendas, including through close liaison with ACT representatives on those national bodies. The ISSG or JCGRG should be well placed to develop such a mechanism, or take responsibility for this work directly.

Through the consultations, Skills Canberra, the Education Directorate, and CIT have all indicated a strong willingness to work with the industry on these issues. The CIT executive has specifically offered to coordinate a co-design process with the community services industry to better align qualifications, course content and delivery with emerging job roles and capabilities. This something that CIT Solutions has developed successfully with other industries reliant on VET courses.

Recommendation 12

(a) ISSG/JCGRG to consider the development of a structure or process to enable a strategic partnership of the industry with education and training providers, Skills Canberra and relevant trade unions, with the aim of a coordinated approach to future workforce training needs, course content and quality, and student engagement.

(b) As an initial practical step, ISSG to explore the potential for a CIT-industry co-design process to better align qualifications, course content and delivery with emerging job roles and capabilities.

In general, the ACT community services industry appears to be lagging behind in introducing **new technologies**, except where mandated. There is some focus on enhancing organisational systems that better support staff to deliver services, particularly where new business models require it, e.g. automated rostering and invoicing. A number of informants indicated a desire to better use social media to help make their services more accessible.

Technological improvements will also enable agencies to tap into the changing needs of their workforce, including volunteers:

“Particularly younger volunteers will be into spontaneous rather than regular volunteering, more work on line, on the road and from home.”

Noting that new technologies often require large investments based on forward planning, many informants noted that the uncertain environment made such decisions more difficult. There is often a lack of expertise on boards and within management when technology commitments are made, that can result in less than optimal results:

“We recently invested in a new client info and rostering system, which was supposed to take pressure off front line workers. But it seems to take as much extra back office labour to run it as we might have saved in the field.”

Some agencies are starting to focus on how to help improve service user experiences and outcomes through technology, such as assistive technologies/equipment, apps used by clients to enable self-assessment, remote connection to services, or on-line bookings. However, there is also little sharing of information across organizations and peak bodies, apart from notable exceptions at national level, such as the NDS Workforce Wizard. The ACT Industry Strategy advocates a common ICT infrastructure.

While most understood that new technologies and automation would change the nature of work, there was little concern expressed about job losses overall. This is line with research that suggests that automation has only heightened the need for interpersonal skills in the community services occupations. (32)

“AI will soon become critical for many clients, such as better technology in the home. Ironically, this may actually lead to greater value being placed on relationship-based practice, as it becomes clearer what only a human workforce can provide.”

Largely absent from the industry are the ‘big conversations’ about the future of technology and how it might relate to evolving service provision and client needs, particularly at systems level. For instance, agencies collaborating on shared outcomes will require more routine and efficient transfer of client data. Currently, there are few shared platforms, and little effort to develop them.

“It is clear that AI and automation will become more prominent, but it is rare to hear such conversations in the ACT sector.”

Recommendation 13

IT strategy and systems development across the industry should be driven by:

- **enhanced information sharing between agencies, based on client control over their information**
- **building the industry’s capability in digital technology, through joint training and shared practice.**

The industry change agenda noted above heralds **new service models and practices** which have implications for emerging job roles which are likely to require revisions or even substantial reforms to qualifications, skills and attributes/behaviours. This will be not just for specific positions in sub-sectors, but across agencies and service delivery areas. The Aged Care Workforce Taskforce, for instance, noted the likely emergence of job roles around scheduling coordinated care, family liaison, and working with interdisciplinary teams (33). This will require skills mix modelling, including a stronger emphasis on both team approaches within agencies and collaboration between them.

It will be useful to strive for a common understanding across the industry on what such concepts as ‘client-focused’, ‘family-centred’ and ‘trauma-informed’ really mean in practice, and what are the competencies needed. If the industry is to see co-production as more than a buzz-phrase, it will be both a challenge and a critical opportunity for the industry to move beyond a traditional service provision mode, to deep and effective engagement with the communities it serves.

The related challenge is for agencies to act in concert on system change. For instance, as noted in the *Design Report for the Family Safety Hub*, building capability effectively requires system-wide effort. This is not just to enable common approaches in skills like trauma-informed practice or cultural competency, but to ensure that service networks provide integrated offerings for clients (34).

Such considerations strongly suggest the need for joint capability-building efforts between community services industry and ACT Government workforces, where they work with common clients and communities. This was also flagged in Assembly Committee Inquiry into the NDIS, which noted the critical interface for roles like NDIA planner with the rest of the service system (35).

These issues strengthen the case for a more robust industry-wide approach to capability development.

4.3 Improve attraction and retention of the workforce

“community services workers need good pay and conditions, the ability to grow your career, and being able to make a difference.”

“We are proud of our good reputation for highly flexible working arrangements: ‘we look after people’”

Informants were asked “what would help attract and retain workers?” Initial responses consistently highlighted the need for;

- higher pay rates (particularly in ECEC and NDIS services),
- better career progression options, and
- more and better professional development, as highlighted above.

There was also general agreement that the industry’s current ‘**value proposition**’ was a way of working that was strongly values-based and people-oriented, and gave opportunities for teamwork, flexibility, diversity – as encapsulated in the comment above – making a positive difference to people’s lives.

The role of organisational support [aka “back office”] staff was seen as a useful indicator of the industry’s status. It was noted that many people in IT, HR, finance and other corporate functions had skills and experience that could readily be employed in other industries, and indeed could earn more elsewhere. Many we spoke to referred to the values and flexibility of their community services workplace as reasons they were attracted and stayed. In a number of cases they had made deliberate moves from the private sector or the public service, for these reasons.

When focussing on the negatives, people also noted the push towards **casualisation and underemployment** in some sectors, high turnover, an ageing workforce, and the particular Canberra factor of competition from large ACT and Commonwealth public service employers.

Many agencies noted that the ERO had helped temporarily, but the **pay gap** was still there. Some agencies are continuing to pay over-award wages to remain competitive, but are finding this an increasing challenge as profit margins are shaved and surpluses are hard to come by.

“The demand for quality service provision is rightly growing. So we are asking more from our staff, and higher qualifications in some cases, but with no real increase in pay. This is not sustainable.”

“While the wages rates for Registered Nurses are similar wherever they are employed, they get much better career pathways in a major hospital, than in a community health service.”

New and improved **career pathways** will be needed, to break down the perception that career options are limited, or that the industry is simply a stepping stone into government. A number of informants advocated establishing roles for senior clinicians/practitioners who are broadly equivalent to senior managers. There is also greater potential to attract public servants into the community services industry, although pay and conditions remains an impediment. [note these matters are dealt with in detail in a related Insight report].

There were some interesting differences between respondents at senior levels (i.e. boards and senior management) and lower level staff – both front line and back office.

As reflected in the *State of the Sector Report*, senior managers were most likely to raise government policy and funding issues, and the industrial context, similar to the factors noted in Section 4.1. Non-management staff also raised the **quality of leadership and management** within their organisations. In some cases they expressed a lack of confidence in management, that could be a factor in forming a future intention to leave their agency, and even the industry. It should be stressed that these observations were made in passing and not rigorously tested. However, they accord with recent surveys done elsewhere (36).

The upside of this observation is that the quality of management is an issue very much within industry's influence. Anecdotally, it is also creating competition within the industry, as people consider shifting organisations due to the poor experiences they may have had in one agency, compared to the better reputation of others.

All the above factors are pertinent, but the industry's focus remains largely on staff retention. One informant noted: *"retention is hard, but recruitment is easy"*, and this was a common view, based on people's current experience. This is also reflected in the Workforce Plan, which highlights retention over attraction, as per the *State of the Sector Report 2016*. However, as our Future Workforce Report indicates, attraction of a younger workforce is likely to become an increasing priority, given current age profiles and the projected growth in service demand generating greater competition for labour.

The lack of attention to future workforce attraction is to some extent a function of the absence of forward planning, outlined in Section 4.1. As an experienced board director noted:

"Agencies are focused on the staff they have now, but not the ones they'll need later"

Attraction/recruitment was more of a concern for those running programs in the fastest growth areas; aged care and disability, and is certainly reflected in national trends. The late 2018 *State of the Disability Sector Report* indicated that 63% of employers were finding it difficult to recruit staff, compared to 42% a year earlier. This applied particularly to allied health professionals, given the competition for their services from other sectors (37).

Looking to the future, a range of matters are proposed to enhance retention and attraction. A number of priorities raised in consultations could become the focus of industry action to deliver more systematic strategies for attraction and retention. The observations and recommendations below should be seen as complementary to those on Capability in Section 5.2

Better targeting of new and younger workers, and establishing 'pipelines' for new recruits, can be pursued through work/student placements from secondary schools and colleges as well as the tertiary sector. As noted above, the industry could significantly improve its engagement with CIT, ACT schools and colleges, and the broader education and training sector.

For instance, few community services agencies – individually or at peak body level - are accessing opportunities such as Australian School Based Apprenticeships or VET in schools (38). There appears to be only sporadic engagement with CIT and universities on content and quality, and student placements are, as noted above, most often the result of particular working relationships. However, those organisations who do pursue these opportunities report good outcomes:

'Student placements often turn into job applications, and staff'

Clearer messaging to young people about the industry is needed, including its role in social change and social justice, not just the traditional 'helping'. This feedback was in fact strongest from

educational institutions and providers, who are reporting this values-driven interest from young students.

“To attract the right people, we need to change the image of the industry, so that workers are seen as change agents, not remedial helpers.”

There are also opportunities to market to young people some of the emerging non-traditional roles, which will be driven by new technologies, and an increasing focus on data management and analysis (39)

A number of initiatives could be considered and developed at industry level, based on promising practice both locally and interstate. A notable example is the Geelong Careers in Community Services and Health Program, which raises awareness and potential recruitment among school-aged young people through VET in Schools, or school-based traineeships into further education, training or employment in the community services industry (40).

Recommendation 14

An early priority for strategic partnership on education and training (as per Rec 12 (a)) should be industry-wide approaches to develop ‘pipelines’ for new young recruits. Practical examples such as the Geelong Careers in Community Services and Health Program should be considered.

Through the consultations, a number of other priority areas were highlighted to assist in improving workforce attraction and retention. A common feature was that people often raised specific examples of good practice, but these were rarely widespread or consistently implemented:

- Greater use of industry-wide resources and partnerships with community-controlled agencies could better engage potential **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers**, and support them in mainstream workplaces. A small number of mainstream agencies that have had some success in maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, largely through a combination of developing deep and respectful partnerships with the local community, and making this a priority for workforce development.
- There is scope to better shared approaches to supporting workers with **lived experience**. There is a wealth of experience in local agencies and sectors that could be usefully drawn on, particularly in community health sectors. There are also some key lessons from national programs and advocacy campaigns like HIV/AIDS (41).
- Only a handful of agencies are explicitly **targeting volunteers** as a pool for recruitment to paid positions, despite the obvious advantages.

“Our large volunteer pool has been a big source of new paid staff. More than 50% have come from there.”

Recommendation 15

ISSG to consider processes to enable industry-wide sharing and adaption of good practices for attraction and retention of community services paid staff and volunteers.

Finally, given the strongly shared views about low pay rates, casualisation, and other workforce impediments, there is space for a new collaborative dialogue between key partners to consider **industrial reform** and improving **workplace practices**; to include employers, unions, government, service users and communities (42).

An obvious area to drive common interests is the funding, pricing and subsidy models that contribute to keeping both wages and service quality lower than they should be. NDIS, aged care (particularly for non-professional occupations) and ECEC are notable examples.

In disability and aged care in particular, there is rapid growth in the least secure, lowest paid jobs, creating high turnover and obstructing quality delivery.

In any community service, casualisation of the workforce has implications for continuity of care and support for clients. Informants reported that it also impacts on the ability of services to:

- work in an integrated way across the service system, or even as part of a multi-disciplinary team within a program or agency, and
- participate in key reform processes such as the increasing move towards early support rather than crisis responses.

The longer-term objective here must be to build a sustainable industry:

“Unless we make these jobs more attractive to workers through improved education, training, qualifications and career pathways, we will not be able to fill the positions required...the jobs will only be filled if they are much better respected and rewarded than they are today.” (43)

This is much more likely to occur through a collaborative approach across the industry, enabling a unified voice to government. As noted above, such matters are often reliant on national factors such as industrial awards and Commonwealth funding policies. However, a united ACT industry with strong partnerships will have greater chance of influencing those national agendas. It could also work towards common approaches on ACT matters, such as whether and how the Secure Local Jobs Code should apply to the industry.

Recommendation 16

ISSG to consider industrial reform and workplace practices for its forward agenda, with the aim of enhancing pay, conditions and sustainable quality services across the industry.

4.4 Grow the workforce to meet current and future needs

As highlighted in the Future Workforce Report (Att. C), aged care and disability are now and will continue to demonstrate the strongest growth in the industry over the new few years. Skills Canberra has stated that 500 extra workers per year for the next four years will be need for the disability sector alone.

“Even if the forecasts are overestimated we still expect that the disability, health and aged care sectors will continue to grow and experience workforce shortages and competition for workers in the future, regardless of the NDIS, because of the ageing of the population.” (44)

Early indications are that labour shortages are likely to be felt keenly in professional streams, such as allied health, where competition is particularly strong.

In order to meet current and future workforce requirements, we need to identify what those needs are on an ongoing basis. The Workforce Plan includes actions to:

“Collect and analyse relevant data to provide the industry with a regular workforce observations and trends to support workforce planning”, and

*“Review workforce characteristics and needs and align to community needs assessment”
(Actions 1.1.1 & 1.1.2)*

Improved and more regular data collection on the status of the industry and its workers will be critical for measuring progress, and a robust picture of strengths and weaknesses.

The reports attached are intended to provide a baseline for such information. In particular, the Snapshot Tool at Attachment D will enable a regular diagnosis of industry trends, including staff and volunteer perceptions of working in the industry. It will also enable information to be collected on matters such as underemployment, which will be critical to growing the capacity of the current workforce to meet needs. This will be complementary to the quantitative data on industry and sector skills shortages, collected by agencies like Skills Canberra.

Recommendation 17

ISSG to consider the suitability of the proposed Snapshot Tool to measure the future status of the community services workforce.

Conclusion - Preparing for growth

A key finding from this project is that significant work will be required by the industry, at all levels, to best prepare for the growth and change in community services delivery over the next few years.

A range of initiatives relevant to growing the workforce, and listed in the Industry Strategy Workforce Plan, have been covered in this report, particularly regarding connections with VET and higher education, student placements, volunteers, and collaboration on industrial matters.

Qualitative changes related to new capabilities and ‘ways of working’ will be just as important. A greater focus on networked services and working with communities will increasingly require that agencies work more closely with other service sectors across and outside the community services industry. Such approaches cannot rely just on dissemination of ‘pockets of good practice’ but will require high level industry leadership and partnerships.

As noted in section 4.1, any communications strategy to promote the industry needs to be preceded by internal marketing to ensure clear and consistent messaging from industry leaders, leading to practical reforms. For example, the focus on entry points to working in the industry will require prior agreement across disparate sectors about how to best describe roles and set minimum standards for ‘core skills’.

Underpinning any such advances should be more strategic collaboration between community services peak bodies on areas of common concern, as a foundation for a strong and effective industry.

Attachment A – Community Needs Analysis	see separate report
Attachment B – Current Workforce Profile	see separate report
Attachment C – Future Workforce Needs	see separate report
Attachment D – Snapshot Tool	see separate report

Attachment E - References

- (1) *A Matter of Care - Australia's Aged Care Workforce Strategy*, Report of the Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce (*A Matter of Care*), June 2018.
- (2) See Dewey et al, *Co-production and innovation – creating better solutions for future public services implementation*, Issues Paper no. 3, Public Service Research Group, UNSW, undated, and Nous Group, *Demonstrating the value of community control in Australia's HIV response* (Nous Group), June 2016
- (3) *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-28*.
- (4) *A Matter of Care*, p.14
- (5) Joint Community Government Reference Group, *ACT Community Services Industry Strategy (Industry Strategy)*, July 2016, p.3
- (6) *Industry Strategy*, p.27-28
- (7) *Industry Strategy*, Attachment A
- (8) *Victorian Community Services Industry Plan*, p.4
- (9) HESTA, *Transforming Aged Care*, 2018, p.41
- (10) *Industry Strategy*, p. 7
- (11) ACTCOSS and SPRC, *The State of the Community Services Sector in the Australian Capital Territory* (State of the Sector Report), December 2016, pp.59-63
- (12) *Industry Strategy*, p.29
- (13) *A Matter of Care*, pp.21-2, and *Victorian Community Services Industry Plan*, p.28
- (14) *A Matter of Care*, p 48 & 53
- (15) National Disability Services, *State of the Disability Sector Report* (NDS), Nov 2018.
- (16) Ryan R & Stanford J, The Centre for Future Work at The Australia Institute, *A Portable Training Entitlement System for the Disability Support Services Sector* (Australian Institute), April 2018, pp9-10, and *A Matter of Care*, p 14
- (17) NDS, p.14
- (18) For example, AICD, *Not-for-Profit Governance Principles*, Jan 2019
- (19) *A Matter of Care*, p 32 & 68.
- (20) See HESTA, *Transforming Aged Care*, 2018, p. 13; and Future Social Service Institute, *Victoria's Social Economy – Social Opportunity, Economic Growth* (FSSI), Sept 2018, p.27
- (21) *Victorian Community Services Industry Plan*, p.49

- (22) See also FSSI.
- (23) *Victorian Community Services Industry Plan*, p.11
- (24) Nous Group, p.24
- (25) See FSSI, NDS, Australia Institute, and Cortis et al, *Reasonable, necessary and valued: Pricing disability services for quality support and decent jobs*, SPRC, June 2017
- (26) Children First Alliance, *Submission to the 2019-20 ACT Budget Consultation*, Nov 2018.
- (27) NDS, p.53
- (28) Australia Institute
- (29) *NDS ACT Budget Submission 2019-20*
- (30) ACT Government Submission to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Social Services – Inquiry into the implementation, performance and governance of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the ACT (ACT Government Submission), pp.11-12
- (31) Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Social Services – Inquiry into the implementation, performance and governance of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the ACT, Report 4 (Standing Committee), p.62
- (32) FSSI, p.21
- (33) *A Matter of Care*, p.28
- (34) ACT Government and Think Place, *Family Safety Hub Design Report*, Jan 2018, p.24
- (35) Standing Committee, p.58
- (36) See *A Matter of Care* and *HESTA*.
- (37) NDS, p51
- (38) *A Matter of Care*, p.31
- (39) Deloitte Access Economics, *Forecasting the future – Community Services in Queensland 2025*, p.54
- (40) *Victorian Community Services Industry Plan*, p.26
- (41) See Nous Group
- (42) As suggested for aged care under Strategic Action 13, *A Matter of Care*
- (43) FSSI, p.5
- (44) ACT Government Submission, p.9

Attachment F - Consultations

1. Chris Redmond - Woden Community Service
2. Simon Viereck - Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT
3. Carrie Fowlie & Amanda Bode - Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drugs Association
4. Will Mollison & Justin Barker - Families ACT/Youth Coalition
5. Darlene Cox - Health Care Consumers Association
6. Capital Health Network
7. Garrett Purtill - Unions ACT
8. Rey Reodica - NDS ACT
9. Meg Richens - Kippax UnitingCare
10. Veronique Gouneau - CIT
11. Susan Helyar - ACTCOSS
12. Anita Dolstra & David Miller - Skills Canberra
13. Philippa Moss - AIDS Action Council
14. Peter Humphries - ACU Social Work Dept
15. Marcia Williams - Women's Centre for Health Matters
16. Paul Ryan - CIT
17. Jean Giese - Volunteering & Contact ACT
18. Sharon Tuffin - Karralika
19. Louise Selles - Education Directorate
20. Matt Davies - Red Cross
21. Andrew Mehrton - CMTEDD
22. Camilla Rowland - Marymead
23. Mary Pekin - Relationships Australia
24. Leading Social Change Network
25. HR Network
26. Community Services #1 People & Culture staff
27. Dawn Casey and Dave Hobson - Board Directors
28. Lee Maiden - Communities@Work
29. Anne-Maree Sabellico - CSD
30. Jenny Kitchin - Anglicare
31. Jo Wood - CSD
32. Caroline Hughes - Yurauna Centre
33. Kim Davison - Gugan Gulwan
34. Gugan Gulwan staff
35. Martin Fisk - MensLink
36. Michael Dunne - Barnardos
37. Marc Emerson - Health Directorate
38. Mirjana Wilson - Domestic Violence Crisis Service
39. Kate Cvetanovski - Northside Community Service
40. Glenda Stevens - Palliative Care ACT
41. Frances Crimmins - YWCA

Attachment G - Abbreviations

ACTCOSS	ACT Council of Social Service
ACU	Australian Catholic University
ANU	Australian National University
ATODA	Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Association
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CIT	Canberra Institute of Technology
CYFSP	Child, Youth and Family Services Program
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ERO	Equal Remuneration Order
ISSG	Industry Strategy Steering Group
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Board
JCGRG	Joint Community Government Reference Group
MHCC	Mental Health Community Coalition
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDS	National Disability Scheme
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
VET	Vocational Education and Training