

# Better Skills, Best Care

DHS Workforce Design strategy

May 2005

This is the second in a series of updates about the Better Skills, Best Care strategy.

## **Service-initiated pilots**

Calls for submissions for health workforce and eye care pilots were circulated to publicly funded health service providers in Victoria (hospitals, community health centres and primary care partnerships) on 13 April 2005, seeking pilot projects that involved:

- Evaluation and/or roll-out of existing innovative workforce roles; and/or
- Assistance with the development and implementation of new and redesigned roles.

Despite the short time frame, the response was extremely positive. By the 3 May 2005 deadline, 102 submissions were received. Proposals were received from all DHS Regions, addressing all identified DHS priorities for the 2004-05 funding round.

Submissions are currently being evaluated. Once this process has been finalised successful services will be notified and listed on our website site

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/pdpd/workforce/workforcedesign.htm>. The breadth and depth of submissions was a clear indication of the interest from health services across Victoria. Thank you to all that applied.

## **DHS-initiated projects**

Together with the call for submissions for service-initiated projects, innovative ideas for workforce design have also been generated from discussions with DHS program area staff, and the call for submissions provided potential pilot sites for these initiatives. Projects that are being progressed include:

### Advanced allied health assistants (AHAs)

This project will investigate opportunities to extend the role of AHAs in identified professional and service streams and develop Advanced AHA roles that complement the work of existing professionals, build on the Health Training Package Cert III AHA qualification, and could form part of an articulated career path with the relevant undergraduate qualification. The project will also facilitate the development of tailored Certificate IV competency-based training for these extended roles, investigate barriers to change and evaluate the impact of the potential new roles.

### Support roles in Mental Health

This project will identify current roles undertaken by Psychiatric Services Officers (PSOs) and role change opportunities within various public mental health settings. The project will identify competencies for amended PSO roles and specify the requisite training, within the context of a PSO career path that can articulate with other mental health qualifications. It will also identify cultural and practical barriers to enhanced PSO role changes and strategies to address these.

## **Skills mix analysis and redesign tools**

Copyright licensing arrangements for skills mix analysis and redesign tools have nearly been finalised. These materials, from the UK NHS Modernisation Agency, will provide guidance for the

process of role design, and will be made available to Departmental staff, clinical staff and external consultants to enact the strategy. These materials will be attached as PDF files on the Department's Internet site and be distributed to interested individuals and organisations to print and use for their own purposes. Feedback is sought on the usefulness of these materials in the Victorian health and community services context, and any adaptations required to facilitate their future use.

### **Evaluation**

An evaluation framework for the Better Skills, Best Care strategy is currently being finalised to enable evaluation of the strategy and its pilot projects, between now and end-June 2006. It will:

- Assess the workforce design methodology and tools implemented through the pilots,
- Measure the impact and outcomes of the strategy, individual pilots and groups of pilots,
- Identify the successes and failings of the strategy's constituent parts, and
- Allow comparison across pilots in terms of cost and benefits.

### **Next steps**

- To ensure the success of each pilot (DHS and service-initiated), a tailored communications strategy will be developed to ensure conversations with all interested parties, design of work place appropriate roles and announcements of achievements and learning as we progress.
- Following the success of the first themed public forum, a second themed public forum is proposed to inform the industry of the issues related to the strategy and stimulate debate. Further details will be announced soon.

### **Questions?**

Any questions about the Better Skills, Best Care strategy or any of the projects can be directed to Jennifer Colbert, Service and Workforce Planning Branch, Department of Human Services:

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