

Victorian Allied Health Workforce Research Program

Information sheet

Background

The Victorian allied health workforce comprises around 43,000 health professionals working across registered and unregistered allied health professions across a range of sectors. Allied health services are a significant component of primary, community and acute health care. Yet, there is no reliable source of allied health workforce data.

The limitations of the existing allied health workforce data are recognised at state and national levels. There is no consistent information available about the size of the allied health workforce, settings and turnover patterns.

To respond to this, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services has engaged Southern Cross University (SCU) to carry out the Victorian Allied Health Workforce Research Program.

The research program will strengthen the evidence base of selected Victorian allied health professions. The program will generate new qualitative and quantitative data not available from existing data sources. The information will identify key workforce development issues that influence the capacity of allied health professions to meet service demand. This program will be pivotal in informing future government policy decisions.

Research approach

Table 1 presents the allied health professions within scope for the Victorian Allied Workforce Research Program.

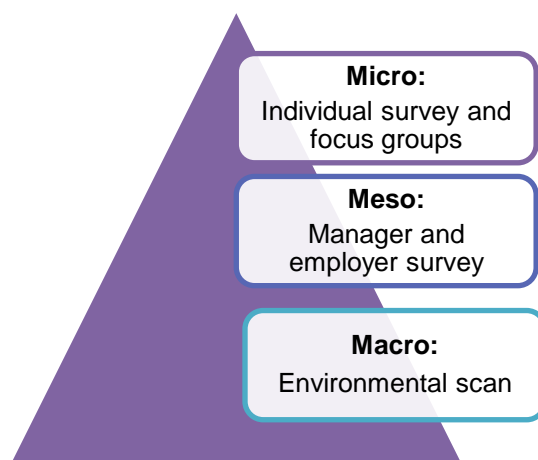
Table 1. Allied health professions included in the research program

Therapy Disciplines		Science Disciplines
Allied health assistance	Play therapy	Audiology
Art therapy	Podiatry	Medical laboratory science
Chiropractic	Psychology	Nuclear medicine
Dietetics and nutrition	Social work	Optometry
Exercise physiology	Speech pathology	Orthoptics
Music therapy		Pharmacy
Occupational therapy		Medical physics
Oral health (not dentistry)		Radiation therapy
Osteopathy		Medical imaging
Orthotics and prosthetics		Sonography
Physiotherapy		

Note: This table includes updated terminology and differs slightly to the document named 'Information Sheet – September 2017'.

A three-tiered approach is being used to capture workforce data at macro, meso, micro levels (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Three-tiered research approach



In 2015, macro level data was collected for all identified professions through an environmental scan that included a combination of existing workforce data and a survey completed by each professional association. Profession-specific reports are available from the Department of Health and Human Services on request.

Each year, for three years, professions identified by the Department of Health and Human Services are contributing to tier two and three of the research. This involves gathering in depth information from employers of allied health professionals (meso-level data) and individual allied health practitioners (micro-level data) through a workforce survey and profession-specific focus groups.

The survey asks allied health professionals about their past and present employment, factors that have influenced their career path to date, and issues that might affect their future career decisions.

Managers and employers are asked about their workforce size and locations, skill gaps, and recruitment and retention issues.

Table 2 presents the professions for which detailed research occurred in the first two years of the research program, and those that will be included in the third and final year.

Table 2. Allied health professions contributing to detailed research

Year 1 (2015 / 2016)	Year 2 (2016 / 2017)	Year 3 (2017 / 2018)
Allied health assistance Physiotherapy Sonography Speech pathology	Occupational therapy Psychology Social work	Audiology Dietetics Exercise physiology Medical laboratory science

As for the first two years of the research, in the final year the research program will engage managers and employers of the four identified professions; and individual professionals working in these professions or who are qualified to work but haven't yet secured employment in the profession.

To establish a comprehensive view of the workforce, responses are needed from all employment contexts, including government, private practice, not-for-profit organisations, and universities.

Follow this [link](#) to complete the survey.

Contributing to the research program

There are a number of ways to contribute to the success of the research program:

- Complete the survey if:
 - you currently work, or have worked, in Victoria in one of the professions being researched this year
 - you are qualified in one of the professions being researched this year and are seeking work in Victoria
 - you are a Victorian-based manager or employer of individuals in roles requiring a qualification in the professions being researched.
- Within the survey, nominate to contribute to a profession-specific focus group.
- Share the survey with your professional peers, managers and employers across all employment sectors. Reinforce their role in building knowledge of Victorian allied health workforce issues.
- Follow us on Facebook and Twitter, and share our posts with your peers and networks.

Program outputs

The outputs of the Victorian Allied Health Workforce Research Program will include:

1. **Environmental scans:** Snapshots of the allied health professions presenting a summary of available workforce data and key workforce issues; and an overarching analysis highlighting trends for the Victorian allied health workforce.
2. **Profession-specific reports:** Detailed reports providing an in-depth analysis of 11 professions identified by the Department of Health and Human Services, drawing on the data sources identified above.
3. **Workforce statistics:** De-identified workforce statistics provided in report format and as an Excel spreadsheet.

Program governance and ethics

The program has ethics approval from Southern Cross University Ethics Committee (approval number ECN-15-171).

Program governance is provided by an over-arching Advisory Committee and discipline-specific Reference Groups.

Program duration

This is a three-year program that commenced in April 2015 and will conclude in March 2018.

Program team

The research team from Southern Cross University comprises Professor Susan Nancarrow, Dr Alison Roots (Project Manager), Ms Gretchen Young, Ms Katy O'Callaghan, and Ms Annie Banbury. The team brings extensive expertise in allied health workforce development, strategy planning and evaluation.

Further information

To find out more visit the project [webpage](#).

You can also email Dr Alison Roots (Project Manager) from Southern Cross University at ahpworkforce@scu.edu.au

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