

# **Keeping Our Sector Strong:** Victoria's Workforce Plan for the NDIS Summary Report 2021



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The images in this document depict actual services and recipients of services. This document may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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Available at Keeping our Sector Strong Public summary report 2021 [www.vic.gov.au/keeping-our-sector-strong-public-summary-report-2021](http://www.vic.gov.au/keeping-our-sector-strong-public-summary-report-2021).

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# Introduction

Keeping Our Sector Strong (KOSS), Victoria's workforce plan for the NDIS, was released in 2016. KOSS was created to guide the disability sector through five years of groundbreaking change by supporting disability workers to build the capabilities needed to thrive in the new NDIS environment.

The plan was supported by a \$26 million investment package that helped lay the foundations needed to build the workforce of the future, and to help attract and retain a disability workforce of sufficient size, with the right knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, to deliver high quality, person-centred support.

This summary report provides an overview of key achievements since the plan's release, made possible by close collaboration between the Victorian Government and disability sector stakeholders across the state.

The breadth of work delivered through KOSS addresses multiple workforce-development priorities, with projects and initiatives that have supported staff through the change, strengthened career pathways, and helped better equip workers to support people with disability to live the life they want.

The full workforce plan is available on [vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-workforce-plan-ndis) – Victoria's workforce plan for the NDIS <<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-workforce-plan-ndis>>.



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'I used to think of disability support work as meal assistance and bathroom changes but it's so much more than that. It's about connecting with people, supporting them to grow, to be out in the community, to advocate for them – helping them achieve what they want in life.'

**Kelly, Supported Independent Living Practice Coach**

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**KOSS vision:** a disability workforce of sufficient size, with the right knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, to deliver high quality, person-centred support under the NDIS.

## 2016–2021

KOSS workforce plan released in 2016 to guide the disability sector through five years of groundbreaking change.

## \$26 million

KOSS workforce plan backed by an investment package to strengthen and grow the disability workforce.



### Intelligence

Build intelligence on workforce trends to inform workforce planning and provide an evidence base for the future.



### Supply

Improve workforce supply by increasing the disability sector's capacity to attract and retain workers with the right skills and values to meet the growing demand for high-quality, individualised support across the breadth of participant needs. Victoria will need between 74,500 and 83,100 total workers to meet demand by June 2024.

## Four objectives guided activities across nine priority areas.



### Capability

Build workforce capability through quality education and training opportunities aimed at developing a high-performing workforce with the knowledge and skills required to thrive under the NDIS.



### Innovation

Maximise opportunities for innovation in practice, service delivery and workforce models to drive improved outcomes for people with disability.

# KOSS priorities

## 1

### Understanding workforce needs

#### NDIS Workforce Longitudinal Research Study

The Victorian Government engaged Ipsos Public Affairs to undertake a longitudinal study between 2018 and 2020 to understand how the disability workforce is experiencing the NDIS, what matters most to them about their work and what skills and training they need.

This research will help build a comprehensive picture of the Victorian disability workforce and how it's changing over time.

#### Key findings from the NDIS Workforce Longitudinal Research Study include:

- Workers feel increasingly positive about the NDIS.
- Knowledge and understanding of the NDIS is improving.
- Workers are getting used to NDIS systems and processes and feeling more confident about the benefits.
- Mental health is a key concern and a priority for workers, emphasised through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Further knowledge of health and safety rights and confidence in processes is needed.
- Workers report a growing sense of isolation due to increasing casualisation and limited opportunity for team work.

The research provides insights for government and service providers about how to support and guide the disability workforce within the NDIS environment.

More information about the study is available on [vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au/ndis-workforce-longitudinal-research-study) – NDIS workforce longitudinal research study <<https://www.vic.gov.au/ndis-workforce-longitudinal-research-study>>.

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“People will often say you have to be a really caring, unique and a strong individual to do this work. I think it’s about having the right attitude and the right values. Disability support can be challenging work, but it’s also incredibly rewarding.”

**Bec, Supported Independent Living Coordinator**

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## 2

### Supporting regions to be NDIS-ready

Victoria’s regional communities face unique workforce and system challenges as they continue to adapt to the NDIS environment. Over two years, Disability Workforce Innovation Connectors (DWICs) worked with rural and regional communities across Victoria to

- build local networks
- co-design workforce initiatives
- support regional organisations to develop local responses to NDIS workforce and service-system challenges.

They also promoted good practice and innovative solutions, facilitated joint work across regional organisations, and coached disability workforce innovation projects.

The DWICs were supported by the Victorian Regional Readiness Fund (VRRF). The VRRF provided one-off grants to 13 organisations who trialled innovative service delivery models that addressed some of the challenges of delivering NDIS support in more remote communities.

**Examples include:**

- Upskilling organisations to provide telephone-based services for regional customers.
- Establishing a mental health regional recovery hub to provide multidisciplinary team-based care for people with psychosocial disability.
- Developing a collaborative approach to provide Aboriginal-specific education, training and skills pathways for Aboriginal people to enter the disability workforce.
- Using trained allied health assistants to build workforce capacity in regional communities.
- Providing autism spectrum disorder training and developing a community of practice for allied health professionals.
- Upskilling local multidisciplinary health professionals in positive behaviour support.

VRRF funded organisations remain committed to continuing partnerships, communities of practice and new workforce models. These projects can act as a 'proof of concept' for the broader disability sector across Victoria, demonstrating innovative ways to address workforce issues that could be applied in other regions into the future. More information about the VRRF is available on [VRRF is available on vic.gov.au – Victorian Regional Readiness Fund <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-regional-readiness-fund>](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-regional-readiness-fund).

### 3

## Supporting staff through transition

A number of projects aimed to provide the existing Victorian disability workforce with the knowledge and tools they needed to transition to the NDIS.

This included a learning and development program comprising widespread training on the NDIS, upgrading of qualifications, scholarships to support workforce capability and access to improved digital technology.

*Get NDIS Ready* was developed as an online learning system to help workers understand the capabilities required of an NDIS workforce, help users self-assess their strengths and gaps and link them to relevant information.

Now that the NDIS transition is complete, *Get NDIS Ready* content will be incorporated into ongoing NDIS readiness training resources available on the Victorian Skills Gateway <<https://www.skills.vic.gov.au/s/>>.

### Support for mainstream service systems

We have also been working with mainstream service systems across health, clinical mental health, justice, child and family services and family violence to build NDIS capabilities and promote a connected system of supports for people with disability who access multiple service systems.

We delivered training and developed practical information, tools and resources to help the workforce understand the NDIS and what it means for the services they deliver. We provided opportunities to develop and apply the new capabilities required to work in the NDIS environment.

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**'When I think about all the support workers I've had; the right support worker will encourage you and make your life better.'**

**Phoebe, NDIS participant**

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'I've been caring for people all my life. It's incredibly important to me and I think it's one of the most important jobs you can do.'

**Bronwyn, Disability Support Worker**

## 4

### Targeting quality training

#### Qualifications Review – completed 2018

We worked with stakeholders throughout 2017 and 2018 to review the CHC<sup>1</sup> Community Services Training Package and the HLT Health Training Package.

To make these courses more relevant to the new demands of the NDIS, we:

- created an *Introduction to the NDIS* course for people interested in a career in disability
- provided feedback to the national training package review (Skills IQ <<https://www.skillsiq.com.au/>>)
- developed six new accredited courses to improve and compliment the CHC Community Services Training and HLT Health Training packages:
  - Supporting People with Complex Support Needs and Complex Physical Needs (22540VIC)
  - Providing Support to People with Psychosocial Disability (22532VIC)
  - Performing Allied Health Tasks and Supporting People with Disability (22529VIC)
  - Culturally Considerate Disability Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (22531VIC)
  - Supporting People with Disability to use Medications (22558VIC)
  - Identifying, Reporting and Preventing Abuse and/or Grooming of People with Disabilities (22530VIC).

<sup>1</sup> CHC and HLT are national training codes

## Professional development for VET trainers and assessors

To help trainers and assessors understand the NDIS and deliver the six new accredited courses effectively, we organised and delivered information sessions, workshops, masterclasses and communities of practice.

## Innovative approaches to work placements

In partnership with disability service providers and training organisations, we developed a best practice framework for coordinating work placements, alongside relevant tools and resources. We did this to ensure students have the right values and personal attributes to work in the disability sector.



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**'After you've been hired as a disability support worker, induction training is usually the first step on a road of continuous learning. There are always opportunities to progress and apply for next-level positions, and managers will often spot people with the potential to excel.'**

**Van, Team Leader**

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# 5

## Achieving excellence in research and education

### Future Social Services Institute (FSSI)

FSSI is a unique collaboration between the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS <<https://vcoss.org.au/>>), RMIT University and the Victorian Government to support the social care and support sector through a time of unique growth.

Our partnership supports career entrants, the existing disability workforce and research candidates through a range of initiatives that have contributed to the growth of a diverse and highly skilled disability workforce for Victoria, including:

- A scholarship program that targets underrepresented groups in the workforce – including students from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. These scholarships support new entrants to gain the skills and qualifications needed to join the sector, and support existing workers to upskill and get a formal qualification.
- Improving the experience of trainees and students by using data and evidence from a series of developmental evaluations, and knowledge shared by partners, to improve workforce training initiatives.
- Creating new educational pathways (in partnership with employers), such as the Higher Apprenticeships, which combine formal accredited training with work-integrated learning to support students to develop the knowledge and skills to thrive in complex and dynamic working environments.
- Building a vibrant community of researchers with a shared interest in social service workforce challenges to grow the evidence base on the issues facing the workforce, and the efficacy of new approaches to addressing these challenges.



'Although I never had any formal qualifications in disability, I brought my lived experience and was able to strengthen it with training. I learned to adapt and develop the skills to cope with unfamiliar situations. Now as a health professional I feel better prepared to support people with different requirements and preferences. This is hugely valuable for anyone and is relevant to so many other professions.'

**Rachel, Doctor and Disability Support Worker**



## 6

### Promoting best practice support

#### Promoting best practice behaviour support – completed 2019

This project was implemented in partnership with RMIT University, National Disability Services (NDS) and the Victorian Government. It aimed to reduce the use of restrictive practices and promote positive behaviour support.

We worked with disability service providers to:

- implement the Roadmap to dignity without restraint <<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/roadmap-dignity-without-restraint-word>>
- drive changes in practice and culture needed to promote positive behaviour support
- test the impact of these changes to provide an evidence base for wider adoption across the state and nationally.

#### Authorised Program Officers project – completed 2020

An online course was developed to enable Authorised Program Officers (APO) to undertake their legislative role to authorise restrictive practices and reduce restrictive practices.

In this project, the Victorian Senior Practitioner collaborated with the University of Melbourne to design a course informed by best practice in restrictive practice reduction – the Roadmap to dignity without restraint and positive behaviour support. The course also covered the legislative requirements of APOs specified in the Disability Act.

In 2021, the course was offered to APOs and will be evaluated by the University of Melbourne in a report due in December 2021.

# 7

## Building allied health capacity

Allied health professionals play an important role in the lives of people with disability, conducting assessments, delivering therapeutic interventions, and prescribing and assisting with aids, equipment and other assistive technology solutions.

Building Victoria's allied health capacity and capability, as well as increasing the supply of allied health professionals, is essential for meeting increasing demand for services among people with disability.

### Promoting greater use of the allied health assistant workforce

We're building the capacity of allied health professionals to support people with disability by:

- supporting greater use of the allied health assistant (AHA) workforce, guided by the Supervision & Delegation Framework for allied health assistants and the support workforce in disability <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/allied-health-workforce/victorian-assistant-workforce-model>>.
- engaging more disability support workers to support allied health professionals to provide supports to participants.

### Allied health capability framework: disability and complex support needs

We're building the capability of allied health professionals to provide high-quality, person-centred supports that promote choice and control for people with disability and complex support needs, through a new Allied Health Capability Framework <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/allied-health-workforce/ahcf-disability-complex-support-needs>>.

Tools and training resources are available to help implement the Framework via My Allied Health Space <<https://www.myalliedhealthspace.org/>>.

These resources will:

- help clinicians understand their professional strengths and areas of growth
- support the development of career goals
- assist employers to develop workforce plans
- demonstrate adherence to the NDIS practice standards.

# 8

## Promoting the sector

### Careers in the disability sector

Working with our partner, National Disability Services (NDS) in Victoria, we funded job fairs, workshops, career expos and webinars to promote careers in disability, and created promotional resources including videos and podcasts about working in the sector.

### Promoting and engaging the sector

In response to what the sector told us in the longitudinal study, we are improving the way we communicate through:

- an improved workforce website containing information, tools and improve access to resources for current and future disability workers, and their employers
- a social media and advertising campaign
- stories showcasing workforce achievements and roles.

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'The staff at my house are good. They listen to me. They're supportive.'

**Shane, NDIS participant**

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# 9

## Measuring our progress

### Evaluation

Over three years, an independent consultant is evaluating our workforce plan to understand its impact, check whether it's meeting the intended objectives and help us make improvements as we go.

Evaluation results are expected in late 2021.

In Victoria we are fortunate to have one of the most highly skilled disability workforces in the country, made up of thousands of individuals working to support people with disability to achieve their goals.

As we keep working together to strengthen our sector, the Victorian Government would like to thank all the peak bodies, service providers, employers, workers, people with disability and government departments who supported the successful delivery of KOSS.

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'My support worker is good company. We talk about a lot of things, and I support him too. We do a lot of things together – basketball, swimming. This is an important job.'

**Vicki, NDIS participant**

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'Some people say that working in disability is rewarding but they wouldn't have the patience to do it. I agree with them; it is rewarding and there are times where it takes patience. But I think it's one of those things; once you're in it, you learn how best to communicate with each person and it's not as hard as you might think.'

**Jack, Disability Support Worker**

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