Workforce in crisis:

Value our Community Services …

Value our Workforce!

A report on remuneration, retention and recruitment challenges facing the non-government Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD), Family and Domestic Violence (FDV), Mental Health (MH) and Women's Health (WH) sectors in Western Australia

Resulting from the 2007 Sector Remuneration Survey

September 2008

Supported by the Western Australian peak bodies:

Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH)

Western Australian Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies (WANADA)

The Peak of Women's Health (PWH)

The Women's Council for Family and Domestic Violence (WCFDV)

Executive Summary

The Community Service Sector in WA is in the midst of a recruitment and retention crisis. The sector workforce is declining with many workers due to retire in the next decade. Youth are not coming into the sector in large numbers. Enrolment in community related University and TAFE courses is in decline. Staff turnover rates are nearly double the national average. Funding meant for direct service provision is being increasingly consumed by recruitment and turnover costs.

Changing economic and social demand has brought increasing consumer demand for services. The turn away rate for some services has increased by 75%. Workers are becoming increasingly overwhelmed with high workloads. Many clients are presenting with co-occurring drug and alcohol and mental health issues. The incidence of stress and burnout in workers is rising. Insurance and compensation costs for agencies have escalated.

There is widespread low remuneration throughout the sector. Salary levels do not reflect the knowledge and skills required of the workforce. Inadequate remuneration has forced many community service workers to leave for higher paying positions in the public and private sectors. There is a high level of pay disparity between the community service and public sectors. Pay disparity for similar positions can be up to $22,000.

The 2007 Sector Remuneration Survey conducted in the Alcohol and Other Drug, Family Domestic Violence, Mental Health and Women's Health sectors in WA found that:

§ Only 4% of survey workers earn above the average adult fulltime weekly earnings.

§ 85% of the workforce hold post school qualifications.

§ 35% of workers do not expect to be working in the sector in 2 years time.

§ 75% of workers reported always, often or sometimes having difficulty in managing their current workload.

§ A total of 123 workers had resigned as a result of stress or burnout in the past two years.

§ 253 staff had left in the past two years indicating that better pay elsewhere was a key factor for leaving.

§ Nearly half of agency managers rated their recruitment success as having no success at all or being unsatisfactory.

§ 76% of agency managers reported receiving 5 or less applicants for advertised positions.

Recommendations for recruitment and retention within the non-government AOD, MH, FDV and WH sectors

Recommendation 1: Increase funding from government to improve competitiveness in attracting and retaining staff.

§ A 30% plus CPI increase in all NGO service funding, with an immediate 20% increase to directly support an increase in staff wages and on-costs.

§ Sustainability built in through CPI to reflect future wage increases and to maintain a level of parity with the public sector.

§ A funding loading equivalent to government for regional services to enable additional staff allowances covering costs including transport, relocation, and accommodation assistance scheme.

Recommendation 2: The sector to develop collective best practice, sector agreed employment conditions and salary benchmarks.

§ Review and propose sector agreed working conditions.

§ Maximise salary packaging opportunities.

§ Improve Industrial Relations knowledge by employers and employees.

§ Link sector specific qualifications with remuneration levels and incremental increases.

Recommendation 3: Develop a strategic workforce plan to attract, recruit and retain staff.

§ Build relationships with tertiary institutions.

§ Promote career opportunities within the sector, with a focus on young people.

§ Develop remuneration based incentive strategies to retain staff.

§ Develop strategies that support continuous professional development and career pathways.

§ Develop a portable long service leave scheme in the sector.

§ Develop supported management processes.

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1   Introduction

Everyone benefits from strong and active community service not-for-profit organisations. They provide a wealth of services to a wide range of people in the community including families, the elderly, youth, the poor, the unemployed, the homeless, people with disabilities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Take a moment to imagine what a typical day might be like if there were suddenly no community services. Childcare would be limited, women and children escaping domestic violence would have nowhere to turn, those caring for the mentally ill would have no respite, the elderly or disabled would have no support in their homes, the homeless would have no place to go for shelter, there would be no second hand shops or food banks and no support for the person committing to end their dependence on alcohol.

As the state of Western Australia develops and the economy and population grows, so does the need for a sustainable and accessible Community Service Sector. Most importantly, this growth must be complemented with a growing well-skilled Community Service Sector workforce.

However the reality is shaping up to be very different from this scenario. The non-government not-for-profit Community Service Sector is in the midst of a workforce crisis. The existing Community Service Sector workforce is ageing and the numbers of workers new to the sector are low. In the future years the sector faces an enormous challenge to retain its existing workforce and to recruit many more workers.

There are many factors currently impacting on the Community Service Sector's capacity for retention and recruitment. These include competing with other more lucrative industries for workers, an ageing workforce and consistently low remuneration levels throughout the sector.

This report seeks to bring attention to the many factors impacting on retention and recruitment in the Community Service Sector in WA with specific reference to the Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD), Mental Health (MH), Family Domestic Violence (FDV) and Women's Health (WH) sectors.

The results of a remuneration survey conducted within these four sectors in 2007 will be drawn upon to provide evidence of the critical state of the problem and the urgent need to find effective solutions. The report will bring a focus to the impact current widespread low remuneration levels in the sector have on the capacity of the sector to be effective and competitive in the areas of retention and recruitment as well as highlighting the devastating impact this is expected to have on our Community Service Sector if left unaddressed.

2   Remuneration Survey

In 2007, four peak bodies in the Community Service Sector joined to survey their member agencies and respective workforces. The peak bodies were the:

§   Western Australian Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies (WANADA), the peak body for Alcohol and Other Drug agencies in WA;

§   Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH), the peak body for Mental Health agencies in WA;

§   Women's Council for Family and Domestic Violence(WCFDV), the peak body for Family and Domestic Violence agencies in WA; and,

§   Peak of Women's Health (PWH), the peak body for Women's Health agencies in WA.

The survey had two components - a manager's survey for each agency and a survey for individual workers in each agency.

This was the first time such an extensive survey had been undertaken within these four sectors in Western Australia. Illustrating widespread concern for the workforce issues, sector support for the survey was substantial with 95 organisations and 521 workers across the sectors responding.

2.1   Scope of Survey

A total of 224 surveys were sent out to eligible member agencies of one or more of the peak bodies. This may have included some overlap, where agencies are members of more than one peak. Agency responses were only counted once, from the sector to which they responded. The overall agency response rate was 42% of 224 surveys sent. Some agencies may have received surveys from more than one peak and therefore the real rate of response is recognised to be higher.

Table 1: 2007 Sector Remuneration Survey response rate

Sector	Total No of member agencies in sector	No of agency responses	No of individual responses	Agency Response rate
AOD	93	35	207	38%
WAAMH	55	30	147	55%
WCFDV	50	19	108	38%
PWH	29	11	59	38%
Grand Total	224	95	521	42%

2.2   Aim of Survey

The aim of the survey was to obtain an overall view of:

§   The range of remuneration awards and levels being offered by AOD, FDV, MH and WH sector agencies;

§   Workforce development issues and strategies in relation to remuneration, recruitment and retention;

§   Worker qualifications within the sectors; and

§   Worker satisfaction, expectations and intentions in relation to their current and future employment in the sectors.

Results from the survey have evidenced the need to facilitate change across sectors and statistics are used throughout this report to support the general sector issues it raised.

2.3   Survey Methodology

Two purpose designed surveys were developed.

The Agency Survey for Managers contained questions relating to;

§   range of awards used as remuneration base;

§   range of salary packaging benefits offered by each agency;

§   non-salary packaging benefits or incentives offered by each agency;

§   provision of Employee Assistance Programs to staff;

§   occurrence of critical incidents; and

§   key factors in staff turnover identified by managers.

The Individual Staff Survey contained questions relating to;

§   job title;

§   key roles undertaken in agency;

§   years worked in sector;

§   frequency of job changes;

§   length of time in current position;

§   number of hours worked per week;

§   yearly gross salary;

§   capacity to manage current workload;

§   current level of job satisfaction;

§   recent changes to working conditions;

§   qualifications and current enrolments;

§   training and support received;

§   worker expectations of promotional opportunities;

§   length of time workers expect to be in current position; and

§   length of time workers expect to be in sector.

Survey packages were sent to all member agencies of the four sectors in metropolitan, regional and remote areas. The survey packages contained:

§   A managers survey
§   An individual staff survey (to be copied by the service)
§   A cover letter

To ensure an acceptable response rate was achieved, an invitation to complete the survey was placed in sector newsletters, in e-mail sent to service managers and through surveys made available to download from peak body websites. Follow up phone calls were made to agencies who had not responded after the published return date.

2.4   Snapshot of Respondents

Table 2 provides a snapshot of survey respondents in the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors. Figures are rounded up.

Table 2: Demographics of surveyed workforce in AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors

DEMOGRAPHICS			
Gender		**Length of service in current position**	
Female	83%	Less than 2 years	57%
Male	17%	3-5 years	24%
		6+ years	20%
Age		**Length of service in sector[1]**	
Mean Age Range	46-60	Less than 2 years	32%
Less than 25	8%	3-5 years	30%
Over 60	7%	6+ years	38%
Location		**Salary[2]**	
Metropolitan	75%	Less than 30K	19%
Regional	17%	31K – 40K	37%
Remote	8%	41K – 50K	33%
		51K+	11%

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[1] Sector refers specifically to the sector the worker is currently employed in ie. AOD sector, MH sector, WH sector or FDV sector.

[2] Only 4% of survey respondents earn above the average adult fulltime weekly earnings in the private sector. Only 3% of survey respondents earn above the average adult fulltime weekly earnings in the public sector. Source: ABS. (2007). Key National Indicators: Income March Quarter 2008. Cat. no. 1345.0. Accessed July 4, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/1345.0

3   Defining the Sector

3.1   Scope of the Community Service Sector in WA for the purpose of this report

DEFINING THE COMMUNITY SERVICE SECTOR IN WA

The Western Australian Industry Plan for the non-government Human Services Sector[3] defines the not-for-profit non-government Human Services Industry as including services in the following areas:

§ Health (including mental health, women's health and community nursing);
§ Community Services and Development;
§ Disability;
§ Employment and Training;
§ Aged and Community Care;
§ Family, Children and Youth Services;
§ Drug and Alcohol;
§ Indigenous;
§ Culturally and Linguistically Diverse;
§ Justice;
§ Housing; and
§ Advocacy.

For the purpose of this report the term 'Community Service Sector' will align itself to the Industry Plan definition and refer to the full range of non-government, not-for-profit community service organisations in WA.

THE PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF STATISTICAL REPORTING IN THE COMMUNITY SERVICE SECTOR

The task of identifying trends in the Community Service Sector is problematic due to the tendency to collate health and community services data together, with health largely influencing overall figures. The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) is critical of this method of data collection.[4] NCOSS argues that with health as a major component of the health and community services statistical category, there is no way of truly knowing how accurately statistics and growth projections reflect the situation in the Community Service Sector.[5]

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[3] Government of WA; Department of the Premier and Cabinet. (2004). Industry Plan for the Non Government Human Services Sector: Report of a Working Party.
[4] The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), both group health and community services together.
[5] Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS). (2006). Response to IPART Issues Paper: Review of the skills base in NSW and the future challenges for Vocational education and training. Accessed July 4, 2008 from http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

The latest ABS Statistical Indicators of the Wage Price Index (WPI) for the Western Australian Health and Community Services Industry is a clear example of how current statistical reporting can mask negative trends for the Community Service Sector.[6]

The WPI for Health and Community Services shows a 4.4% increase in wages in the Sept 2006 to Sept 2007 period. However remuneration increases in the Community Service Sector do not reflect this figure.

Table 3 provides examples of the percentage wage increase in 4 Health Sector remuneration agreements and 2 commonly used remuneration awards in the sectors.[7]

Whilst to a certain degree, increases in the Health Sector remuneration examples do reflect the Health and Community Services Industry average WPI of 4.4%, there have clearly been much lower percentage wage increases in the Community Services Sector remuneration examples.

Table 3: Comparison of wage increases between the Health Sector and Community Service Sectors in Western Australia

Award/Agreement	2006 % inc	2007 % inc
HSU WA Health State Industrial Agreement 2006	4.5%	4%
St John of God Health Care – LHMU – Caregiver Union Collective Agreement 2006	4%	3.75%
Ramsay Healthcare WA Hospitals Health Union Enterprise Agreement 2005	4%	3%
Brightwater Care Group (INC) (ANF) Enterprise Agreement 2006	4%	4%
Social and Community Services Western Australia Award 2002 (SACS)	Level 5.1 CSW 2.48% Level 9 CSW 1.71%	Level 5.1 CSW 0.66% Level 9 CSW 0.49%
Crisis Assistance, Supported Housing Industry - Western Australian Award 2006 (CASH)	Level 5.1 CSW 2.81% Level 9 CSW 2.05%	Level 5.1 CSW 0.66% Level 9 CSW 0.48%

Note: Variations to % increase in the SACS and CASH Awards are due to minimum wage award adjustments by the Fair Pay Commission where a cent per hour increase has been awarded as opposed to a % of salary increase.

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[6] ABS. (2008). Labour Price Index: March quarter 2008. Cat. no. 6345.0. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/productsbytitle/4FC15613F59969F2CA2568A9001393A4?OpenDocument
[7] 2007 Sector Remuneration Survey of the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors in WA

DEFINING THE VARIOUS SECTORS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY SERVICE SECTOR IN WA
The Community Service Sector in WA includes a wide range of different service areas. Typically, each service area will refer to itself as a sector and be supported by a peak body.

For the purposes of this report the term 'sectors' will directly refer to four specific sectors which include:

- The Alcohol and Drug (AOD) Sector in WA
  The WA Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies (WANADA) is the peak body for the alcohol and other drug (AOD) education, prevention, treatment and support sector in Western Australia. WANADA currently supports 93 member organisations. Services provided by AOD sector agencies include:
  - § Residential Rehabilitation
  - § Non-residential Rehabilitation
  - § Community Drug Services
  - § Supported accommodation
  - § Sobering up Shelters
  - § Needle and Syringe Exchanges
  - § Prison Outreach Programs
  - § AOD Counselling & Education
  - § Diversion Programs
  - § Residential Detox

- The Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) Sector in WA
  The Women's Council for Family and Domestic Violence (WCFDV) is the peak body representing non-government not-for-profit services assisting women and children with domestic violence issues. WCFDV currently supports 50 member organisations. Services provided by FDV sector agencies include:
  - § Women's Refuges
  - § Emergency Accommodation Services
  - § Multi-cultural Women's Advocacy Service
  - § Counselling for Women
  - § Counselling for Children
  - § Community Education
  - § Aboriginal Counselling Service

- The Women's Health (WH) Sector in WA

  The Peak of Women's Health (PWH) is the peak body representing non-government not-for-profit women's health services in WA. PWH is a new peak body and was formed in 2007. PWH currently supports 29 member organisations. Services provided by WH sector agencies include:

  § Women's Health Centers
  § Parenting and Substance Use Programs
  § Post-natal Depression Services
  § Medical and Clinical Services
  § Multi-cultural Women's Advocacy Service
  § Health Promotion
  § Women's Groups and Classes

- The Mental Health (MH) Sector in WA

  The Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) is the peak mental health representative body in Western Australia for non-government not-for-profit agencies that operate for the benefit of people affected by mental illness. WAAMH currently supports approximately 55 member organisations. Services provided by MH sector agencies include:

  § Mental health promotion
  § Mental illness prevention
  § Research and evaluation
  § Workforce development
  § Clinical treatment and care
  § Early intervention
  § Accommodation support
  § Advocacy
  § Community support

3.2   Size of the Community Service Sector

SIZE OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICE SECTOR IN WA

The most recent statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Community Service Survey provide data from 2000.[8] These statistics show that in June 2000 there were 894 businesses and organisations providing Health and Community Services in WA. Of this number, 247 were for-profit, 563 were not-for-profit non-government and 84 were government.

SIZE OF THE ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG SECTOR (AOD), FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (FDV), MENTAL HEALTH (MH) AND WOMEN'S HEALTH (WH) SECTORS IN WA

Listing the total number of agencies within the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors is problematic. This is primarily due to the diversity of services provided by each organisation. For example a women's health service may provide alcohol and other drug, mental health and family domestic violence support. This service, whilst primarily identifying itself with the women's health sector, may also align itself and have membership with other sectors. Due to the number of services which may crossover sectors, a count of each sector's member agencies does not provide accurate data.

Another method of providing an accurate measurement of the size of the sectors is to refer to any existing research into mapping[9] of each sector. However to date, whilst some sectors have undertaken mapping exercises, others have not. Additionally most of the existing mapping exercises have been limited to specific areas of the state such as the Pilbara or the Kimberley regions.

[8] A follow up ABS survey was conducted in 2005-2006 and the results will be available in July 2008.
[9] Here mapping refers to conducting research to compile a list of all sector organisations and their locations. A set of parameters (such as primary source of funding) are used to determine if the organisation falls within a sector or not.

3.3   Projected Employment Growth of Sector

The Health and Community Services Industry is the third largest employing industry in Australia.[10] The industry employs the highest proportion of females (78%) compared with all other industry sectors.

More than 1 million people work in the sector in Australia and over the past 5 years there has been a 17.2% growth in employment in the sector. Growth is expected to continue over the next five years at a projected 3% per year.[11] This equates to the generation of 170,000 additional jobs in the industry over the next five years.

Based on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations data projections this will mean that one in every four jobs created over the next five years will be in the Health and Community Service Sector.

3.4   Projected Service Provision Growth of Sector

Findings from the Australian Community Sector Survey which reported on agency service provision for the 2005-2006 year clearly show increased demand for community services in WA. The survey was completed by 107 agencies in WA who provided information about their activities over the financial years of 2004-5 and 2005-6.

The survey found that Australia-wide the number of people who received a service increased by 4% from 2004-5 to 2005-6. However in Western Australia the percentage increase was treble the survey's National average findings.

The number of people who received services from respondent WA agencies increased by 13% from 2004-5 to 2005-6.

The flow on effect from this increased demand for services was a corresponding increase in the numbers of people turned away from services.

From 2004-5 to 2005-6 an alarming 54% more people were turned away from respondent services in WA. A total number of 34,197 people were turned away in one year from the 107 agencies who responded to the survey.

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[10] Australian Government. (2007). Industry Profiles: Australian Jobs. Accessed July 6, 2008 from http://www.workplace.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/A59A5A66-A6C6-4512-ACC8-1006D9331812/0/DecAustralianJobs2007.pdf
Note: this figure includes employment in the not-for-profit, for-profit and government sectors
[11] Australian Government. (2007). Industry Profiles: Australian Jobs. Accessed July 6, 2008 from http://www.workplace.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/A59A5A66-A6C6-4512-ACC8-1006D9331812/0/DecAustralianJobs2007.pdf

3.5   Importance of the Sector

In 2000, Western Australia had nearly 900 agencies providing Health and Community Services across the state.[12] Of these services, 63% were provided by the not-for-profit non-government sector, 27% were provided by the private sector and 10% were provided by the public sector. This equates to nine out of ten health and community services in WA being operated by the non-government sector.

VALUE ADDING

If the non-government Community Service Sector was taken out of the equation in the provision of welfare and community services, there would be substantial costs both financially and socially for state and federal governments.

There are significant benefits to the government in purchasing community and welfare services from the non-government sector. In 2005, the Western Australian Council of Social Service conducted a comparison of the average cost to government per user of accommodation services, for government and non-government providers in WA. The results showed that non-government accommodation support services in WA were an average of 50% more cost efficient than government delivered services.[13]

Non-government community service organisations in WA have a turnover of more than half a billion dollars each year, making them vitally important to Western Australia's metropolitan and regional economies.[14]

The capacity of the non-government Community Service Sector to generate income further value adds to cost effective service provision. The results of the Australian Community Sector Survey 2007 found that for 2004-06 the sources of income for not-for-profit non-government agencies were on average, 26% Federal funding, 45% State funding, 9% client fee income and 20% own source income (including donations, sponsorship, membership fees, sale of goods and services to the public).

VOLUNTEERS

In 2006, 542,000 people volunteered 71 million hours in Western Australia. Statistics show that of these volunteers, one in every five volunteered in the Community and Welfare Sector.[15]

The use of volunteers in the Community Service Sector significantly helps to reduce government expenditure on the provision of welfare and community services.

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[12] ABS. (1999-2000). Community Services Australia. Cat. no. 8696.0 Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/8696.01999-2000?OpenDocument
[13] WACOSS. (2006). Discussion Paper: Smart moves forward. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://wacoss.org.au/images/assets/publications_papers/smart_moves_forward_sept2006.pdf
[14] WACOSS. (2005). Budget Submission October 2005: Supporting arguments for WACOSS to use in its pre-budget submission for improved funding to the non-government human services sector. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://wacoss.org.au/images/assets/publications_reports/pbs_2006_07_acil_tasman_report.pdf
[15] ABS. (2006). Voluntary Work Australia. Cat. no. 4441.0 Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4441.02006?OpenDocument

Volunteer time is currently valued at $24.09 per hour.[16] This equates to a contribution of $1.6 billion to the WA economy.[17]

Volunteering is integral to the future viability of the Community Service Sector, and without volunteer support, many agencies would find it difficult to operate. In addition to contributing to sector viability, volunteering in the Community Service Sector provides people with invaluable work experience and can be an effective strategy for attracting new workers into the sector.

Volunteering time is given freely but managing volunteers is not cost free to agencies. Agencies need to dedicate staff time and resources to ensure the effective recruitment, retention and support of volunteers. An increase in use of volunteers to substitute the work of paid workers not only compromises the value of volunteering but places increased demand on agencies to resource the management of volunteers, demanding an increase in worker skills and knowledge to manage people, often a duty placed alongside their core role.

BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

The Australian Services Union's (ASU) 'Building Social Inclusion in Australia' report refers to the hidden value of the community service workforce in the maintenance of social capital.[18]

Community services help to build social capital by:

- § Bringing people together who have a common need for services. ie parents using the same child care service or young mums attending parenting support groups.
- § Building links between people who might otherwise be isolated from the community ie domestic violence victims or people from new and emerging communities.
- § Establishing links between workers and clients. The personal interaction between worker and client has meaning for both. The satisfaction derived from the helping relationship is one of the key motivators for people to work in the Community and Welfare Industry. For many disadvantaged or marginalised people, positive interaction with community service workers is one of the key elements in the management of their problems.

As the majority of services for disadvantaged and marginalised people are provided by the not-for-profit non-government sector, the sector plays an integral role in the building and maintenance of social cohesion in Australia.
If sector viability comes under threat due to inadequate support from state and federal governments, then the social cohesion of our society will naturally, also be threatened.

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[16] Department of Communities Queensland. (2008, May). The economic value of volunteering in Queensland. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/volunteering/documents/economic-value-of-volunteering.pdf
[17] ABS (2006). Voluntary Work Australia. Cat. no. 4441.0. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4441.02006?OpenDocument
[18] Australian Services Union (2007). Australian Services Union Discussion Paper. Building Social Inclusion in Australia: Priorities for the social and community services sector. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.asu.asn.au/media/building-social-inclusion2007.pdf

DIVERSE AND FLEXIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY

Small agencies often have a greater capacity than larger organisations to provide services which are tailored to the needs of their local communities. Smaller sized agencies play an integral role in the Community Service Sector due to their likelihood of:

§   Being closer to grass roots community issues and lifestyle which enables them to more quickly identify new and emerging issues and consequently to act upon them.

§   Having less bureaucracy, small agencies can often mobilise quickly and respond to community needs in a short time frame.

It is in the government's interest to ensure that government agendas and processes do not threaten the existence of smaller community service agencies. Often it is small, local level organisations that communities most identify with. Diversity of services enables a wider variety of community needs to be met, and supports community ownership of services and outcomes. This is crucial to upholding social cohesion.

4   Sector Workforce Planning

4.1   Definitions

It is not within the scope of this report to provide an analysis of workforce development and workforce planning models. However, it is important to acknowledge that in order for the sector to take a unified approach to recruitment and retention there needs to be greater awareness in agencies and managers around:

§   the meaning and scope of workforce planning and development; and,

§   the relevant strategies needed for workforce development and planning in the Community Service Sector.

WORKFORCE PLANNING

Workforce planning is a strategic activity which enables organisations to identify, develop and sustain the workforce skills needed to successfully achieve both service goals and a healthy workforce. An understanding of the gaps between an organisation's workforce needs and the available workforce supply will enable organisations to target approaches and develop strategies to close the gaps.

In a recent discussion paper on sector viability, WACOSS outlines workforce planning as including:

§   identifying staffing problems;

§   predicting future changes to the workforce and population age demographics;

§   developing workforce skills; and

§   ensuring adequate service delivery in the future.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The National Centre for Education and Training on Addition (NCETA)[19] notes that workforce development extends well beyond education and training and also includes;

§   recruitment;

§   retention;

§   management support systems and structures;

§   remuneration and awards;

§   the dissemination of research findings; and

§   best practice.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AOD, FDV, MH AND WH SECTORS

Consultation with the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sector peak bodies found that in general, workforce development definitions were aligned with the NCETA model.

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[19] Roche, A. (2002). Workforce Development Issues in the AOD Field: A Briefing Paper for the Inter-Governmental Committee on Drugs. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.nceta.flinders.edu.au/pdf/issues.pdf

An additional area of focus mentioned by the four peaks included their role in lobbying governments for change and recognition in relation to workforce development. Table 4 gives an insight into the areas initially identified by one or more of the peak bodies as coming under the umbrella of workforce development. This table could potentially be a useful starting point for analysis of future workforce development priorities and gaps.

Table 4: AOD, FDV, MH and WH peak body conceptualisation of workforce development

Retention and Recruitment	§ satisfied staff wanting to stay in jobs due to good wages and conditions § Strong viable workforce with capacity to sustain itself and grow and develop in the future
Management support systems and structures	§ Peak bodies to support system and relevant sectors § Creating systems and processes for long term sustainability for a healthy workforce § Clear policies and procedures to support the workforce § Partnership development § Safety § Supervision systems internal and external
Remuneration and awards	§ Redressing inequity that currently exists between government and not-for-profit sector in relation to equal work for equal pay. § Working conditions
Best practice	§ Identify trends § Ensuring mapping and future directions work, for example standards, is being undertaken § Identifying and planning ahead for changes in consumer demands, needs and social trends § Recognition of who is in our workforce …gender, ethnicity, ability, geographical location
Education and training	§ Further development of skills § Self identification of needs by industry workers encouraged and not dismissed § Continually motivating and up-skilling of current workforce § Developing worker attributes § Capacity building
Lobbying for change	§ Facilitating government responsiveness § State and Commonwealth awareness & action on issues § Raising awareness within the community

4.2   Workforce Development Models

In May 2007, the New South Wales Council of Social Service released a paper outlining a selection of models and approaches to workforce development.[20] The purpose of this initiative was to assist with the development of a workforce development strategy for the NSW Community Service Sector.

The models presented in the paper included:

§ A 'three levels' approach developed by the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA).

§ A 'workforce development as a component of capacity building' approach. Similar models have been adopted by the NSW Health Department and the Network of Drug and Alcohol Agencies (NADA).

§ A 'Strategic Imperatives' model, developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Health.

§ A 'Systems, Current and Future' approach developed by the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA).

§ A 'Team/Individual Strategic' approach developed by the Government of Scotland (the National Strategy for the Development of Social Service Workforce in Scotland, 2005).

As previously mentioned, it is not within the scope of this report to include an analysis of existing workforce development models that are relevant to the needs of the non-government community sector in WA. However, recently conducted research such as the NCOSS initiative could be a good starting point in the development of a workforce model for the WA Community Service Sector.

4.3   Current Workforce Planning Initiatives in the Community Service Sector in WA

Groups and sectors within the Community Service Sector in Western Australia have responded to the growing recruitment and retention crisis by developing a number of initiatives. These approaches represent the level of concern and degree of sector action already at work to ensure the sustainability of services.

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[20] New South Wales Council of Social Service. (2007, May). Models of Workforce Development. Accessed June 26, 2008, from http://www.ncoss.org.au/workforce/index.html

AUSTRALIAN SERVICES UNION WA BRANCH: COMMUNITY SERVICE - WHAT'S IT WORTH? CAMPAIGN

The Australian Services Union (ASU) campaign aims to consult with members across the Community Service Industry in order to:

§   Develop a core set of widely supported employment standards (including salary increases and portability of conditions) for implementation across the SACS sector; and

§   Work with stakeholders in the SACS industry to educate the public of Western Australia about the work that SACS workers do, the value currently placed on it compared with what it should be and the capacity of organisations to carry out the work with appropriate funding.

The campaign is currently trying to achieve this aim through:

§   Holding 3 sector forums;

§   Holding regional and issue specific forums;

§   Meeting with state government ministers;

§   Conducting a survey of SACS members;

§   Circulating a petition state-wide calling for increased remuneration and better working conditions for the Community Service Sector workforce. The petition will be presented to parliament in mid 2008; and

§   Publishing a booklet of reader's stories which platforms the plight of sector workers.

HUMAN SERVICES INDUSTRY ROUND TABLE (HSIR) WORKFORCE PLANNING GROUP

The Human Services Industry Roundtable was established to monitor the implementation of the WA Governments 2004 Industry Plan for the Non-government Human Services Sector. The WA Human Services Industry Roundtable determined that a key priority for 2007 and 2008 would be to identify strategies and seek action to address the workforce needs of the human services industry and in particular for the non-government sector.

A Workforce Planning Group of the HSIR was formed to advance this project. The group was comprised of representatives of the non-government sector (Western Australian Council of Social Service, National Disabilities Services WA and the Children, Youth and Family Agencies Association) and the government sector (the Department of Education and Training and Office of the Minister for Employment Protection; Housing and Works and Indigenous Affairs).

The broad aim of the Workforce Planning Group is to:

§   Identify strategies and seek action to address the workforce needs of the human services industry and in particular for the non-government sector.

The initiatives implemented so far have included:

§   The development of a proposed framework for workforce planning in the Human Services Industry.

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§ The undertaking of a Recruitment and Retention Research Project with the aim of:

1. Quantifying as far as possible recruitment and retention issues relevant to the human services industry in WA, and in particular for the non-government sector;

2. Identifying options and strategies for improving recruitment and retention within the human services industry, with particular emphasis on the non-government sector.

CEO'S GROUP STRATEGY

The CEO's group was established in February 2008 and consists of 27 CEO's from the not-for-profit community sector. The broad aims of the group are to:

§ secure increase in funding from the government contracts to pass on to staff for better wages and conditions to retain and attract staff.

So far, the group has met monthly and formed a steering committee and a marketing group. During this time, the group has developed strategies to achieve their aims, these are yet to be published.

NATIONAL DISABILITY SERVICES (NDS): WORKFORCE PLANNING CEO STRATEGY GROUP

The Workforce Planning CEO Strategy Group was established in 2004 and consists of six CEO's from larger organisations in the disability services sector. The broad aims of the group are to:

§ Improve disability NGO capacity to recruit and retain direct care staff.

§ Increase remuneration for disability service workers.

The initiatives implemented so far have included:

§ 4 written reports: 1 x Chamber of commerce report; 2 x Cumberland reports and an impact statement;

§ Partnering with the Disability Services Commission in a major recruitment strategy which included:

  § Market research with potential and current workers in sector with resulting report entitled 'Building our workforce'

  § State-wide advertising and promotion in media

  § Establishment of a call centre during the campaign

  § Establishment of a Website for recruitment

  § Production of a DVD of care worker for potential applicants to view

  § Development of brochure

  § Involvement in career expos

  § Evaluation of recruitment strategies

§ Lobbying government for increased involvement of the sector in current formal training and professional development options;

§   Industrial frameworks; and

§   Acquiring Federal funding to improve recruitment and retention and pilot a range of retention and recruitment strategies within organisations.

5   Stressors on the Sectors

Before an analysis on the internal workforce stressors and challenges faced by the sectors is presented, the wider context from which the four sectors are operating must be acknowledged.

There are many additional and accumulative tensions impacting on the sectors and influencing each sector's capacity to remain viable and to maintain a skilled and stable[21] workforce.

5.1   Economic Stressors

A BOOM ECONOMY LED BY THE MINING BOOM

The current mining boom is fuelling Western Australia's economic growth rate increase of 6.3% increase for the 2006-07 period. In comparison, the national average annual growth rate increase was 3.2%.[22]

This has had many positive effects for the state including:

§   Low unemployment levels. WA has the lowest rate of unemployment in Australia (3.3), with the national unemployment rate being 4.2.[23]

§   An increase in high paying jobs.

§   Increased state and federal revenue.

§   Increased growth of other industries such as finance and commerce.

§   Increased population and infrastructure growth in some rural and regional areas.

The boom has also had a negative impact on WA's community and workforce including:

§   An increase in fly in fly out workers (FIFO). The fly in fly out lifestyle has created new relationship, parenting and AOD issues for individuals and families.[24] The transient nature of FIFO work can be a barrier to accessing community services for FIFO workers. This is due to there being less clarity around where exactly workers reside and consequently where they access services. Shift rosters may also impact on their ability to attend regular appointments of groups.

§   Although the average weekly total earnings for male employees in WA now sits at 17% above the national average, the corresponding figure for women

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[21] The term stable refers to a status where workers are remaining longer in the non-government not-for-profit sector.
[22] ABS. (2006 - 07). Australian National Accounts: State Account. Cat. no. 5220.0. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/7DE4FEC8F80F37FACA2572210019B1E6/$File/52200_2005-06_(reissue).pdf
[23] ABS. (2008, June). Australian Economic Indicators. Cat no. 1350.0. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5C959A99C1708AD2CA2574580013413C/$File/13500_jun%202008.pdf
[24] Ngala conducted research into the FIFO lifestyle in 2005 entitled *Fly-in fly-out employment: Managing the parenting transitions.* The research findings can be accessed from Ngala's web page at http://www.ngala.com.au/docs/Fly%20In%20Fly%20Out%20Report.pdf

remains at 4% below the national average.25 This indicates that although WA's economy is growing, women (who make up nearly 80% of the Community Service Sector workforce and are one of the primary groups accessing community services) are not benefiting from the boom in regards to remuneration levels.

§ The mining and construction industries are seen as much more lucrative options for workers. Many agencies in the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors must compete with mining companies for workers. The impact has been greatly felt in the retention of Aboriginal Workers in regional and remote areas. Mining companies are hiring Aboriginal Education Officers, many of whom are sourced from the Community Service Sector.

§ Regional and remote areas housing Mining Industry workers have crucial shortages of accommodation and housing as well as higher costs of living including rent, groceries and petrol. This makes it nearly impossible for Community Service Sector agencies in these areas to recruit staff to relocate from other locations.

Mining Boom: Effect on Sectors

• Many Community Service Workers are being lost to the Mining Industry.

• Lack of accommodation for Community Service Workers in some regional and remote areas.

• FIFO lifestyle and resulting issues have caused higher consumer demand for services.

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25 ABS. (2008, June). Australian Economic Indicators. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5C959A99C1708AD2CA2574580013413C/$File/13500_jun%202008.pdf

INCREASED COST OF LIVING

In 2007 the cost of living in Perth increased by 3% for the year.[26] Since then, growth in the Perth Consumer Price Index (CPI) has accelerated over the March quarter 2008, up by 1.4% to 4.4%. The main contributors to growth in prices were food, transport and housing, health and education costs.

In comparison, award wages in the not-for-profit non-government sectors increased only marginally over the same period inline with the Fair Pay Commission findings. Table 5 shows the disparity between Perth's CPI and the growth of two commonly used awards in the WA Community Service Sector, the SACS Award and the CASH Award. For many workers under these awards, wages have grown at less than half the rate of the increase in the cost of living.

Table 5: Comparison of SACS and CASH award increases against Perth CPI

Examples of most commonly used remuneration awards in the sectors		
Award	% increase in remuneration for 2007	% CPI increase 2007
Social And Community Services Western Australia Award 2002 (SACS)	Level 1.1 Community Service Worker 1.80% Level 5.1 Community Service Worker 0.66% Level 9 Community Service Worker 0.49%	3%
Crisis Assistance, Supported Housing Industry - Western Australian Award 2006 (CASH)	Level 1.1 Community Service Worker 1.83% Level 5.1 Community Service Worker 0.66% Level 9 Community Service Worker 0.48%	3%

Increased Cost of Living: Effect on Sectors

- It is becoming more commonplace for Community Service Workers to be under financial stress. As a result, growing numbers of workers in the sector are working 2 jobs in order to make ends meet.
- Greater numbers of workers are leaving the not-for-profit non-government sector after being forced to seek higher paid work.

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[26] ABS. (2008, March). Consumer Price Index, Australia. Cat. no. 6401.0. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/productsbytitle/938DA570A34A8EDACA2568A900139350?OpenDocument

HOUSING CRISIS

Although house prices in Perth are falling, the cost of renting has continued to rise. The median weekly rent for a house in Perth has now reached $330. This represents a 6.7% increase over the past 12 months.[27] For a family on a low income of $30,000 (after tax weekly wage of $493.27), 67% of their weekly income is spent on rent.

In the regional areas of Kalgoorlie and Geraldton, rents have increased by 28% and 50% respectively over the past 12 months. Further north in the Pilbara region, the average cost of renting a house in Port Hedland ranges from $845 per week for a 1-2 bedroom dwelling to $1064 per week for a 3 bedroom dwelling.[28] In these areas, potential job applicants for community service organisations are typically limited to those who are currently housed in the district. With rents as high as $1000 per week in some towns in the north it is not financially viable for workers from other areas to relocate.

Homelessness is no longer confined to those without any income. With the cost of living rising and income lagging behind, many workers now find themselves in need of supported accommodation. The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) in WA is operating to capacity and is unable to meet the unmet needs of homeless people. The number of new accommodation referrals turned away by SAAP services[29] has increased from 50 % in 2004-05[30] to nearly 75% in 2006-07.[31] As a result of the current housing shortage, clients are not exiting from SAAP transitional accommodation services. This has created a bottlenecked system that cannot meet the demands of newly homeless people. In addition, the current waiting list for public housing is 5-7 years with 17000 people waiting for housing.[32]

Housing Crisis: Effect on Sectors

- Increased consumer demand for services due to the effects of homelessness.

- Greatly increased workload for accommodation services due to influx of people needing accommodation.

- Sector workers unable to afford to maintain their own homes or meet rising rent prices on their low salaries.

- Limited potential applicant base in some regional, rural and remote regions. This has resulted in some positions not being filled. It is also creating the potential for under qualified staff to be recruited, needing additional on the job training and support.

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[27] Real Estate Institute of WA. (2008). Property Market Indicators: March quarter 2008. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://reiwa.com/res/res-marketindicators-display.cfm

[28] Pilbara Landcorp. (2008, March). Pilbara Housing and Land Snapshot Update: Quarterly Report. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.pdc.wa.gov.au/projects/current-projects/pilbara-housing-and-land-snapshot-update-(quarterly-reports).aspx

[29] SAAP services include: Transitional supported accommodation services, crisis and temporary accommodation for young people, refuges and, crisis and temporary accommodation for homeless single adults and families.

[30] Australian Institute for Health and Welfare

[31] Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence (WA)

[32] Shelter WA. (2008, May). Presentation for The Mental Illness Fellowship of WA. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.shelterwa.org.au/publications/papers_reports/2008/SWA_Mangano200805.pdf

5.2   Demographic Stressors

WA'S GROWING POPULATION

The population of Western Australia increased by 2.3% (46,700 people) in 2006-07, which was the fastest growth rate of all of the states and territories in Australia.[33] 35% of WA's population increase from 2006-07 was due to new births, 55% to net overseas migration and 9% to interstate-migration.[34]

Perth metropolitan area (in which 74% of WA's population resides) experienced the state's largest growth, increasing by 35,300 people (2.3%) in 2006-07. This equates to an influx of nearly 680 people per week to Perth.

WA's growing population has increased the number of people needing support from community services. Many agencies have had difficulty coping with the increased demand. Growing client demand coupled with a sector that is working to full capacity under current funding levels, has impacted on the quality and quantity of services provided. Consequently, waiting lists are growing longer, and more and more clients are being turned away from services. The impact has also been felt by workers. The sector workforce is being placed under increasing pressure and having to cope with unrealistically high workloads.

WA's Growing Population: Effect on Sectors

- Increased demand for services.

- Increased workload on sector workforce.

- An increased demand on rental housing, which has had an increasing effect on the numbers of people either experiencing or facing homelessness.

- Increased numbers of people being turned away from services.

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[33] ABS. (2006-07). Regional Population Growth, Australia. Cat. no. 3218.0 Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3218.0Main+Features12006-07?OpenDocument
[34] ABS. (2006-07). Regional Population Growth, Australia. Cat. no. 3218.0 Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3218.0Main+Features12006-07?OpenDocument

WA'S AGEING POPULATION AND AGEING WORKFORCE

While the ageing of Australia's population is a general trend, the Health and Community Service Industry workforce is older relative to other industries. The issue of ageing applies to both the consumers of community services and the workforce.

Table 6 provides a comparison between the ages of all employed persons in Australia and the ages of all employed Health and Welfare Support Workers in Australia for the February 2008 quarter. These are very similar to the results from the *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey*.

In the occupation category of Health and Support Worker, 47% of the workforce is aged 45 years and over. This potentially means that nearly half of the workers in this category may retire in the next decade, creating additional pressure on already existing Community Service Sector workforce shortages.

Table 6: Age comparison of employed workforce[35]

Age comparison between all employed persons in Australia and Health and Welfare Workers in Australia (ANZSCO)[36]						
	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55 +
All Employed Persons	4%	11%	24%	24%	23%	14%
Health and Welfare Support Workers	n/a	7%	16%	30%	29%	18%

WA's Ageing Population and Ageing Workforce: Effect on Sectors

- More people are working to an older age, leaving less time to act as carers for family and elderly parents, forcing care to be undertaken by others or undertaken alongside full or part time work.

- Greater incidence of burnout and stress issues as existing sector workers remain longer in increasingly complex and high stress jobs.

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[35] ABS. (2008, Feb). Labour Force, Australia. Employed persons by Sex, Occupation (ANZSCO), Age, Status in Employment, August 2006 onwards. Data cube: Excel spreadsheet. Cat. no. 6202.0.55.001 - 6291.0.55.003. Accessed July 7, 2008 from
http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6291.0.55.003Feb%202008?OpenDocument
[36] The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) is a system of classification developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Statistics New Zealand (Statistics NZ) and the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) for use in the collection, analysis and dissemination of occupation statistics in Australia and New Zealand.

DECREASING POPULATIONS IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

Whilst areas in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions have recently experienced large population increases, many rural and regional areas in WA not associated with the resource boom are experiencing population decline.

During 2006-07, population numbers declined in a quarter of all Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Western Australia. Of the LGAs with declining populations, most (28 of 37) already had populations below 2000, and nearly all (34 of 37) were in regional WA.[37]

Low growth areas are often linked with high unemployment rates as there are fewer job opportunities for workers. Population decline in rural and remote areas is also closely linked to a reduction in services and community support.[38]

A major finding from the 2001 Health and Community Services Labour Force report was that the supply of workers in the Community Services Industries decreased with increasing remoteness, from 1,008 per 100,000 population in the major cities of Australia to 796 per 100,000 in very remote Australia.[39]

As a result many rural and remote areas in population decline experience increased rates of unemployment, suicide, domestic violence, mental health issues and alcohol and other drug use.[40]

Community service organisations in rural and remote regions therefore face the double burden of increased consumer demand for their services alongside a reduced population base and skills base from which to staff their services. In rural and remote regions in WA, where government health and community services are also in decline, there is even greater demand placed on local community service organisations.

Decreasing Populations in Rural and Remote Areas: Effect on Sectors
- Services in remote and rural areas are under pressure from increased client demand.
- Retention and recruitment issues for services in rural and remote areas are magnified due to there being reduced pools of potential applicants to fill positions and increasing the chances of positions remaining vacant for prolonged periods.
- If the situation does not improve, it may result in positions being filled with under qualified staff who need additional on the job training and support.

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[37] ABS. (2006-07). Regional Population Growth, Australia. Cat. no. 3218.0. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/productsbytitle/797F86DBD192B8F8CA2568A9001393CD?OpenDocument
[38] Australian Services Union. (2007). Australian Services Union Discussion Paper. Building Social Inclusion in Australia: Priorities for the social and community services sector. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.asu.asn.au/media/building-social-inclusion2007.pdf.
[39] Australia Institute of Health and Welfare. (2001). National Health Labour Force Series No 27. Accessed July 7, 2007, from http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/9328
[40] Australia Institute of Health and Welfare. (2006). Rural, regional and remote health: mortality trends 1992–2003, Rural health series no. 7. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10276

5.3   National and State Reform Stressors

Both State and Federal governments currently have reform agendas occurring in the Community Service Sector in Western Australia. Current reform strategies have involved substantial restructuring of the Community Services Sector for both government departments and contracted service providers.

This change has required managers of community service agencies to have additional expertise in management, governance, research, welfare provision and brokerage.[41]

State and federal directed change has also brought increased demands from both state and federal governments for increased levels of accountability, professionalism, evidence based practice and continuous quality improvement.

The Community Service Sector has responded to the demands of State and Federal governments through increased training and up-skilling of workers, including ongoing training and support to implement quality frameworks and standards. However, there has been no corresponding increase in remuneration levels alongside of the development of additional skills, expertise and professionalism.

Predictably this has led to many workers leaving the sector for jobs with remuneration levels that better reflect the amount of expertise and responsibility required of positions.

REDUCED GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR WELFARE PROVISION

Changes in government policy parameters such as Welfare to Work legislation have significantly reduced the government's responsibility for the provision of welfare services. This has had a substantial and far reaching effect on the Community Service Sector.

As the non-government not-for-profit sector has increased its levels of service delivery, this has created many additional sector needs in relation to training, skills, knowledge and interagency collaboration and partnership working.

A widely reported impact of the Federal government's Welfare to Work Policy, has been the potential negative effect it can have on disadvantaged and/or unemployed people.[42] This population group makes up a large proportion of consumers of community services. Policies which potentially create further disadvantage also place increased pressure on community service organisations and their workforce to cater for the increased complexity of client needs.

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[41] Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS). (2006). Response to IPART Issues Paper: Review of the skills base in NSW and the future challenges for Vocational education and training. Accessed July 4, 2008, from http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

[42] Brotherhood of St Lawrence, St Vincent de Paul Society and the Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne. (2003, May). Much obliged: Disadvantaged job seekers' experience of the mutual obligation regime. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/much_obliged_final.pdf

Reduced Government Responsibility for Welfare Provision: Effect on Sectors
- Increased training needs.
- Increased need in workforce for knowledge of government departments and services.
- Increased workload involving the development and maintenance of interagency collaboration.
- Increase in complexity of unemployed disadvantaged clients.

COMPETITIVE TENDERING

Many community services in WA now operate under service provision contracts that are tendered for in competition with other not-for-profit and for-profit services.

Service provision contracts involve many additional administrative, program and reporting requirements. Most of these tasks require specific skills and experience that differ from those used in direct service delivery. This has created a need for workers who possess a wider range of skills and knowledge to carry out their duties than was previously needed in the industry.

The 2007 ACOSS Community Sector Survey reported that the majority of survey respondents found the funding requirements under government contracts a significant burden. The survey found that many respondents reported that this drew resources away from service delivery and additional funding was needed to assist with the burden.[43]

There is growing discontent that the competitive tendering process unfairly favours larger agencies in the competition to fight for resources. This is primarily due to increased assessment and reporting demands of contracts being financially unviable for smaller agencies.

A discussion paper by WACOSS argues that 'big' is being rewarded as government strategy favours large community service organisations or private sector deliverers over small local agencies. There is also an increasing trend for larger agencies to partner or collaborate with each other to win contracts by undercutting small local agencies. WACOSS notes that this "not only reduces the diversity of the sector but disempowers local communities rather than building their capacity."[44]

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[43] Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS). (2007, Feb). Paper 145: Australian Community Sector Survey. Accessed July 7, 2008, from
http://www.acoss.org.au/upload/news/2102__Community%20Sector%20Survey%202007.pdf
[44] Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS). (2006, Sept, p. 8). Discussion Paper: Smart Moves Forward. Accessed July 7, 2008, from
http://wacoss.org.au/images/assets/publications_papers/smart_moves_forward_sept2006.pdf

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Competitive Tendering: Effect on Sectors

- Increased need for workers to be multi-skilled with no corresponding increase in remuneration.
- Competition between agencies for services, clients and staff.
- Decreased resources available for direct service provision as funding is increasingly consumed by contract administration and management.
- Smaller agencies will face closure or a reduction in the scope of services they provide. This will reduce the diversity of services available to consumers.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CHANGES

In 2006 the new WorkChoices industrial relations system came into effect. The new legislation did little to advance the cause of improving remuneration levels in the Community Service Sector. The Community Service Sector's response to the legislation was largely critical. Despite the change in Federal government in 2007, which halted the development of any further AWA's and placed a timeline of 2010 on existing AWA's, there are lasting ramifications for the Community Service Sector.[45]

The legislation could potentially create a divide between those services who are registered as constitutional corporations and those who are not. Many for-profit organisations and large charities are constitutional corporations and are eligible to use AWA's in the workplace. However, most small agencies are not constitutional corporations and remain under the jurisdiction of the Award system. There is a risk that organisations able to offer AWA's to their staff may choose to offer lower wages and conditions and therefore have a competitive advantage in the tender process.

It is difficult to be fully aware of the real impact that WorkChoices have had on the Community Service Sector in the space of 18 months. However, it must be acknowledged that the AWA's currently in existence will have two more years in which to undermine remuneration levels in the Community Service Sector.

Industrial Relations Changes: Effect on Sectors

- Potential for downward pressure to be placed on remuneration levels.
- Increased pressure on smaller agencies to offer lower remuneration in order to compete for tenders.

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[45] New South Wales Council of Social Service (NCOSS). (2006, November 7). Media Release: Community Sector Summit Considers WorkChoices Challenge. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.ncoss.org.au/media/archive/industrial.html#_061107; Youth Action and Policy Association NSW. (2006, Sept). Impact of WorkChoices on NSW youth services. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.yapa.org.au/yapa/policy/irimpact.php

OHS REQUIREMENTS

Client complexity clearly has an impact on the health and safety of workers providing direct service provision. In the line of their duties, workers are experiencing progressively more aggressive or violent clients and crisis situations. Nowadays it is not only the residential services that have panic alarms installed to ensure staff safety. Many agencies with drop-in services are also increasing their security.

The hazardous nature of direct service provision is reflected in the high numbers of work related lost time injuries for the Community Service Sector. Between 2004-05 and 2006-07 the Community Service Sector in WA averaged 17.7 injuries for every million hours worked in the sector. This figure is higher than the Health Service Industry average (16.4). The average for all industries in WA from 2004-05 to 2006-07 was 12.3 injuries per million hours worked.[46]

A major financial burden which threatens the viability of community service organisations are the increased costs associated with compensation claims and insurance premiums. As the potential for hazard increases, so does the occurrence of physical and stress related injury in workers. The escalation in numbers of insurance claims has pushed up the prices of premiums placing additional financial pressure on not-for-profit agencies.

The cost to agencies of the provision of specialised OHS training such as the management of violent or aggressive clients can be substantial. High training costs often disadvantage smaller agencies as many find it unaffordable to offer training to all direct service staff.

Increased OHS requirements have been especially felt by refuge and residential services where a minimum of two employees are required to be on duty during night shifts. In some cases, this has resulted in the reduction of hours[47] in accommodation services.

OHS Requirements: Effect on Sectors
- The impact of time spent on OHS training requirements places pressure on the time available to deliver direct service provision.
- Allocation of resources to OHS expenses draws from allocation of resources to direct service provision.
- Agencies are under financial pressure due to higher insurance premiums and increased compensation costs.

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[46] Dept of Consumer and Employment Protection. (n.d) Work related lost time injuries and diseases in WA 2004-05 to 2006-07. Accessed July7, 2008, from
http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe/Content/Services/Facts_and_figures/Sub-industry_rates.html
[47] Some services have changed from residential to non-residential due to the high staffing costs involved in the provision of 24 hour care.

POLICE ORDERS

In 2004 the government enacted the Acts Amendment (Family and Domestic Violence) Act to introduce legislative change to family and domestic violence laws in Western Australia. The new legislation gave police officers the right to issue on-the-spot 24 hour and 72 hour police orders on perpetrators of domestic violence.

This policy has been widely adopted by WA police, with the number of police orders steadily increasing each year. 12,296 orders were issued in the first two years following the policy's introduction.[48]

The new legislation has also facilitated an increasing trend in the numbers of domestic violence incidents reported to police. Prior to 2004, there were only 11,000 reported incidents of domestic violence each year. This has increased to 17,061 reported incidents in 2005 and 22,205 reported incidents in 2006.[49]

There has also been a corresponding increase in the number of victims seeking court-ordered violence restraining orders (VROs) which provide a much longer period of protection.

Whilst this legislation has been welcomed by the family domestic violence sector and has resulted in many positive implications for the safety of women and children in WA, it has also greatly increased the workload of workers in the FDV Sector. The legislation has brought with it an increased consumer need for court assistance and legal advice. This has placed stress on the FDV workforce as the additional workload has had to be absorbed by the sector.

Police Orders: Effects on Sectors
- Increased training needs for FDV workers.
- Increased client workload and complexity of work with no corresponding increase in funding for sector or increase in remuneration.

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[48] Shared Parenting Council of Australia. (2008, May 5). Media Release: Domestic violence legislation achieves results. Accessed July 7, 2008, from
http://www.familylawwebguide.com.au/spca/index.php?page=news&type=view&id=349&filter=16
[49] Shared Parenting Council of Australia. (2008, May 5). Media Release: Domestic violence legislation achieves results. Accessed July 7, 2008, from
http://www.familylawwebguide.com.au/spca/index.php?page=news&type=view&id=349&filter=16

STATE GOVERNMENT MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

A key element of the State Government's Mental Health Strategy 2004-2007 is the creation of an extra 420 community-based beds for mental health consumers across Western Australia over the next two years.[50]

This program will almost double the number of community beds available for people with mental illness which will require over 100 new staff in the community sector. The public mental health system will require an additional 425 mental health staff.[51] However, with the Mental Health Sector currently struggling to staff existing services, there is a widespread Mental Health sector unease over where the new staff will be drawn from. Existing mental health services are concerned that current staff may leave to take up these newly created positions.

The WA government has established a Workforce Development Working Group to develop initiatives to attract quality and experienced mental health professionals to Western Australian mental health services, from overseas. This has not been directed at community based service vacancies.

The government reports that so far, 200 expressions of interest have been received.[52] A similar strategy to attract overseas teachers to WA has recently been undertaken by the WA Dept of Education and Training. However the effectiveness of this strategy to recruit large numbers of employees is questionable. The State government UK teacher recruitment campaign resulted in a relatively low number of recruitments (37 teachers were recruited in 2007).[53]

If these figures are representative of the uptake of overseas workers there will be a considerable shortfall in the number of mental health workers required to fill the vacant positions.

Adding to the impact of the State Government strategy has been the increased Commonwealth funding for services such as Day-to-Day Living and Personal Helpers and Mentors.

State Government Mental Health Strategy: Effect on Sectors
- Potential loss of trained and experienced staff from existing mental health services.
- Increased competition between MH services to attract and retain staff.

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[50] Department of Health: Office of Mental Health. (n.d.). Delivering a healthy WA: Western Australia's Mental Health Strategy 2004-2007 [brochure]. Accessed July 7, 2008, from
http://www.mental.health.wa.gov.au/one/resources_view.asp?resourcesID=82
[51] Mental health staff refers to psychiatrists, nurses, social workers and occupational therapists.
[52] Department of Health: Office of Mental Health. (n.d.). Delivering a healthy WA: Western Australia's Mental Health Strategy 2004-2007 [brochure]. Accessed July 7, 2008, from
http://www.mental.health.wa.gov.au/one/resources_view.asp?resourcesID=82
[53] Australian Labor Party. (2007, Feb 21). State embarks on UK teacher recruitment campaign. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.wa.alp.org.au/news/0207/21-06.php

INTEGRATION OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES WITH NON-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

In 2002, the Drug and Alcohol Office developed a new model for drug and alcohol treatment services in WA. The model aimed to better integrate non-government and government services and fill the gaps identified by the Community Drug Summit in 2001.

Since then, a number of government and non-government AOD services in the metropolitan area have 'integrated' into single services. The agencies in each integrated service operate under a unified management system. Within the integrated service, agencies still retain their identities and are still responsible for the employment arrangements and line management of their employees.

The process of working towards integrated service delivery has been stressful for many and has taken up enormous amounts of management time. For some workers, integration has meant changing office locations and working under new managers. However, the most significant aspect of integration for the workforce has perhaps been that government and non-government contracted workers are now often working along side one another whilst being on completely different pay scales.

In this situation, the disparity between Public Sector pay levels and Community Service Sector pay levels not only becomes more visible, but has the potential to create disharmony in the workplace. It also may be a motivating factor for workers to leave the Community Service Sector to take up higher paying positions within the government sector.

Integration: Effect on Sectors

- Integration has made pay disparity between public service and Community Service Sectors extremely visible. It has exacerbated the growing discontent with low remuneration levels for community service workers in integrated services.

5.4   Social Stressors

INCREASE IN AMPHETAMINES USE

Each year, approximately 4,500 emergency department presentations across Perth and 460 mental health admissions to hospital are due to amphetamine use.[54]

In WA, amphetamines use has a wide impact on the community.

§ Substance abuse is a key factor in 57% of child protection applications. Of this proportion, 42% of applications for child protection relate to amphetamine use.[55]

§ Amphetamines use is also closely linked to crime. 86% of female prisoners in Bandyup prison and 74% of male prisoners at Hakea prison have used amphetamines.[56]

§ The rate of mental health problems is high among regular amphetamine users.

§ Regular amphetamine use by youth has a detrimental effect on development and social skills.

Amphetamines users usually require a range of support mechanisms to assist with both addiction and mental health issues.

Long term amphetamine users draw upon a greater amount of Community Sector Services and resources given that they have longer recovery periods and ongoing mental health issues.

The rapidly growing fly-in fly-out (FIFO) mining workforce has signified a change in work patterns for many WA individuals and families. Anecdotal evidence from the AOD sector notes that this phenomenon has influenced patterns of drug use, with increased amphetamines use amongst this population group.

Increase in Amphetamines Use: Effect on Sectors

• Increased workload due to growing need for interagency collaboration and referral processes.

• Increased workload and workload pressure due to longer hours and resources required per client.

• Increased incidents of stress and burnout as workers deal with increasingly complex clients with high needs.

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[54] Quote from media release Mr Terry Murphy, Executive Director of the Drug and Alcohol Office Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Lists/Statements/DispForm.aspx?ID=125868
[55] Government of Western Australia; Drug and Alcohol Office. (2007). WA Illicit Amphetamine Summit 2007 Government Action Plan. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.dao.health.wa.gov.au/Publications/tabid/99/DMXModule/427/Default.aspx?EntryId=227
[56] Government Action Plan Government of Western Australia; Drug and Alcohol Office. (2007). WA Illicit Amphetamine Summit 2007 Government Action Plan. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.dao.health.wa.gov.au/Publications/tabid/99/DMXModule/427/Default.aspx?EntryId=227

IMPRISONMENT FIGURES

Between 2006 and 2007, WA's imprisonment rate increased by 42%. For every 100,000 adults in WA, there are 242 prisoners. For the same period, Indigenous persons were 21 times more likely to be in prison in WA than non-Indigenous. This is the highest rate in Australia.[57]

In 2005, WANADA, the peak AOD body for WA, conducted a survey of member agencies regarding prison client service provision. Approximately one third of WANADA member agencies indicated that they provided services to justice clients while in prison. Many of these agencies also provided post release services.

The WANADA survey found that over a three year period, there had been an average of a 25% increase in the demand for counselling/support from prison transition AOD services.

The complexity of prison clients requires additional time and resources. In comparison with voluntary community participants, justice clients generally present with a range of issues including co-occurring AOD and mental health, and welfare support needs. There is also a greater workload required for the case sharing/management, paperwork, and follow-up for justice clients compared with voluntary community clients.

Government policy is increasingly pushing responsibility for justice clients onto the Community Service Sector through developing programs which require:
- § counselling as a condition of release;
- § post release support; and
- § prison transition support.

As a result, involuntary clients are taking an increasingly larger slice of direct service provision in the Community Service Sector.

Imprisonment Figures: Effect on Sectors

- As a result of more services being provided to involuntary clients, voluntary clients have less access to services.
- Agencies cannot cope with the numbers of justice clients. As a result many of these clients are not receiving adequate levels of service.

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[57] ABS. (2007). Prisoners in Australia. Cat. no. 4517.0. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/2BA146126F0385C8CA2573AF0014C036/$File/45170_2007.pdf

6   The AOD, FDV, MH & WH Workforce

As discussed in Section 5, there are many external stressors impacting on the four sectors.

Managers of non-government not-for-profit agencies in the sectors need to possess a multitude of skills and knowledge in order to keep up with and manage the constantly changing needs and demands of both state and community.

Managers must be well versed in legislative changes, Industrial Relations systems, government contract reporting and accountability requirements and OHS legislation in order to keep their agency viable and competitive.

More often than not, they have to achieve this within the confines of inadequate funding, overwhelming client demand for services and a dwindling workforce in which 75% of those surveyed reported that they always, often or sometimes had difficulty managing their workload. Of these workers, 36% indicated that they intended to leave the sector in 2 years or less.

This depicts a challenging future for the sectors in regards to their capacity to attract more workers to an industry which is operating under the confines of inadequate funding and low levels of remuneration.

Section 6 will discuss the workforce challenges being faced by the sectors. The results from the *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* conducted in the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors will be used to demonstrate the disparity between the crucial services the workforce provide to the community, the skills, knowledge and qualifications they possess and the poor levels of remuneration currently paid.
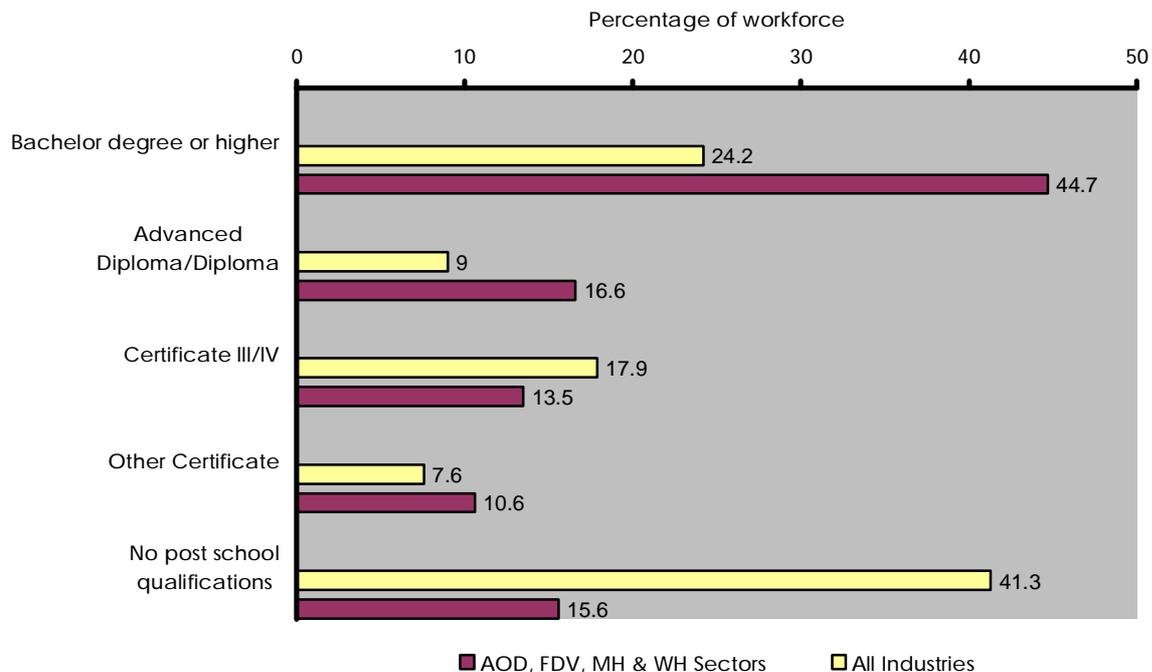
6.1   Qualifications

CURRENT QUALIFICATIONS

According to ABS Education and Work Profile, in 2006, 41.4% of the West Australian workforce held post school qualifications. Of this group 21.1% held a bachelor degree or higher qualification.[58]

As Chart 1 depicts, the percentage of AOD, FDV, MH and WH sector workforce survey respondents holding post school qualifications was more than double this with a total of over 85% holding post school qualifications and nearly 45% possessing a tertiary degree or higher qualification.

Chart 1: Education profile comparison of all Industries and 4 sectors

Percentage of workforce

Bachelor degree or higher	24.2 (All Industries) / 44.7 (AOD, FDV, MH & WH Sectors)	
Advanced Diploma/Diploma	9 / 16.6	
Certificate III/IV	17.9 / 13.5	
Other Certificate	7.6 / 10.6	
No post school qualifications	41.3 / 15.6	

■ AOD, FDV, MH & WH Sectors   □ All Industries

The high ratio of workers in the sectors with qualifications indicates:

§   The complexity of the work and the skills required necessitates formal training.

§   There is a growing level of professionalism within the sectors.

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[58] ABS. (2007). Education and Work, Australia. Cat. no. 6227.0. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/23CE7BE11FB6B55FCA2573B40011AD1C/$File/62270_may%202007.pdf

CURRENT ENROLMENTS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE SECTORS

The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* results reflect sector workforces that are readily engaging in further education and professional development opportunities.

The rate of uptake of sector related training and further education across the four sectors was 34%. At the time the survey was conducted, one in three workers in the sectors was currently enrolled in further education and sector related courses.

Of the current enrolments, 12 workers were in the process of studying for a Masters Degree and 5 were studying for a PHD.

This is an indication of the growing levels of professionalism within the Community Service Industry and also of a general rise in education levels in Australia's labour force.[59]

Research undertaken in 2005 by the Productivity Commission shows a trend for people with tertiary or higher qualifications to work to an older age.[60] This trend is relevant for the sectors' ageing yet predominantly qualified workforce. Workforce strategies which encourage participation and reduce barriers to sector related qualifications could play an important role in future workforce retention in the sectors.

THE COMMUNITY SERVICE SECTOR: A CONVENIENT TRAINING GROUND FOR THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS

Feedback from the *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* included many comments from managers noting the increasing tendency for workers to leave the Community Service Sector and find higher paid work in the Public Sector. There are two major issues of contention here.

Firstly, a contradiction exists between the government's inadequate funding of the Community Service Sector (that effectively limits remuneration levels), and government delivered community services that pay workers up to 30% higher remuneration. This could be understood as an intentional strategy by government to ensure that recruitment in the Public Sector is easier. It could be argued that it is in the government's interest to contain remuneration levels in the Community Service Sector for this purpose.

The second issue of contention is that the Community Service Sector increasingly recognises it is viewed by employees as a convenient training ground for the private and public sectors. The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* found increasing evidence of workers being recruited to positions in the Community Service Sector, undergoing training and education at the expense of their employer, and then leaving for higher paying positions outside of the sector.

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[59] Australian Government Productivity Commission. (2005). Economic Implications of an Ageing Australia; Research Report. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.pc.gov.au/study/ageing/docs/finalreport
[60] Australian Government Productivity Commission. (2005). Economic Implications of an Ageing Australia; Research Report. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.pc.gov.au/study/ageing/docs/finalreport

There has been no cost analysis undertaken regarding the financial and opportunity cost to agencies of this frequently occurring cycle. However, if the costs of….

- § training and any related expenses such as transport and accommodation,
- § backfill of staff to attend training,
- § loss of production due to backfill staff having lower knowledge of the agency and clients,
- § pressure on colleagues, and
- § limited or no service provision to consumers

…..are taken into account, the accumulative costs to the sector would be substantial.

ENROLMENT TRENDS IN UNIVERSITY COURSES

Enrolment numbers in the Bachelor of Social Work degree at three universities in Perth provide insight into upcoming students' levels of interest in pursuing career paths in the Community Service Sector.

Chart 2: Enrolment in Bachelor of Social Work courses in WA Universities[61]
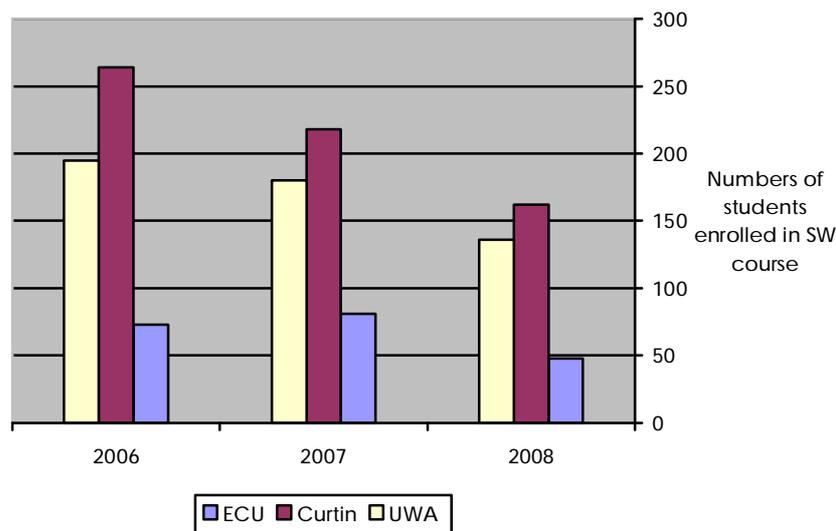
For the past three years, there has been a downward trend in enrolment numbers for all social work courses in Western Australia. In 2008, enrolment numbers decreased by 28%.

Further analysis of the figures show that there are declining numbers of TEE students enrolling in social work courses. This may indicate that;

- § youth are not attracted to the Community Service Sector and/or,
- § there is a general lack of awareness in youth about the sector and/or,
- § students recognise that remuneration as a qualified social worker may not be sufficient to support the debt associated with study.

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[61] Tertiary Institutions Service Centre: Statistical Division. Undergraduate enrolment data for 2006-08. Accessed June 28, 2008, from http://www.tisc.edu.au/

There are also lower numbers of students listing social work as a first preference of study. In 2008 across all universities offering the Bachelor of Social Work course, only 25% of applicants listed it as a first option.

In its employment growth projections for the period 2001-2012, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations rates the social work profession as having strong future growth of at least 2.4% per annum.[62] Comparing the projected growth rate of the social work profession with the falling enrolment rate at WA tertiary institutions raises the question of 'where will the prospective workers come from to fill the need for social workers in the future?'

ENROLMENT TRENDS IN TAFE COURSES

Chart 3: Comparison of regional and metropolitan enrolments in TAFE and University Community Service Worker Courses in WA
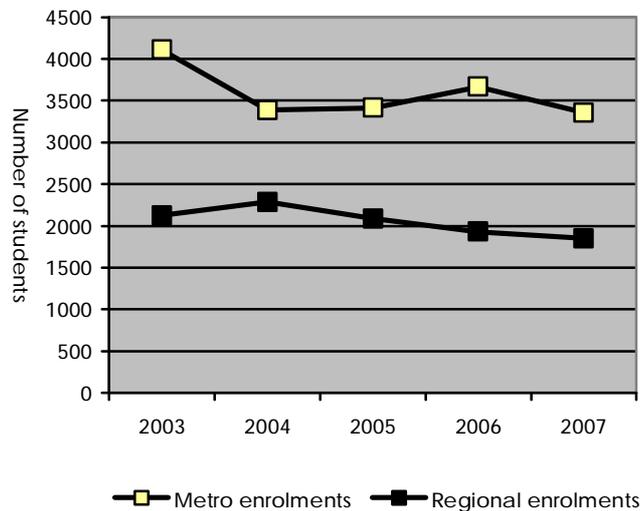
There has been a gradual decline in enrolments for TAFE Community Service Worker courses in Western Australia. Regional enrolments at TAFE and University Community Service Workers (CSW) courses have fallen by an average of 7% per year since 2004. Metropolitan enrolments in CSW courses at TAFE and University have fallen by an average of 4.5% per year since 2003.

There will be many factors behind falling enrolment numbers in community service courses. A declining workforce and low unemployment will provide people with many more employment and training options.

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[62] Employment growth projections for the period to 2011–12 are based on several inputs: occupational employment projections prepared by the *Centre of Policy Studies* at Monash University; recent employment growth; future and actual industry employment growth; and qualitative information on occupational developments.

Even though the key factor causing disinterest in the sector may be low remuneration, it is in the interest of the sector's viability to analyse all possible sector related reasons for declining enrolment numbers in Community Service courses.

A more scrutinised analysis in regards to the sector profile, course relevance, linkage to remuneration increments and course accessibility may reveal additional strategies that could be employed by the sector to reverse or contain the downward trend. This would support the sectors to build relationships with tertiary institutions and consider other workforce planning strategies.

6.2   Remuneration

The salary scales of awards in the Community Service Sector have had no automatic upgrading since 1993. Since, then salaries have only increased if:

§   salary levels have fallen lower than the minimum wage;

§   an agreement has been reached between employees and employers regarding award conditions and remuneration for a period of time; or

§   at the employers' discretion, CPI increases have been passed on to the employee.

This has resulted in a lack of standardized conditions in Awards used in the Community Service Sector. Whilst some of the non-government workforce has had the power to collectively bargain with their employers and obtain annual salary increases, the majority has not.

There are also differing interpretations in the Community Service Sector over the purpose of the incremental increase levels that are structured into awards. Incremental increases are designed to recognise the progressive level of skills acquired by workers from year to year. Under this interpretation, a worker beginning at level 1 would progress to level 2 after 12 month's service and a satisfactory performance review.

Whether this practice is followed or not has been largely up to the discretion of the employer. Currently across the sector there are workers who are progressing through the levels each year and being paid accordingly, and workers who remain on the same level year after year. Workers may also not be offered performance reviews on an annual basis. In addition, in some workplaces, performance reviews may not be linked to pay.

Another point of discussion surrounding incremental increases is their potential to be exploited or misinterpreted by employers. Some employers view incremental increases as effectively being an indexation increase and do not pass any CPI increases on to their employees. These discrepancies show how ineffective Awards are in creating a level field for workers.

REMUNERATION IN THE SECTORS

As noted earlier in Section 2.4, only 4% of survey respondents earn above the average adult fulltime weekly earnings in the private sector. Only 3% of survey respondents earn above the average adult fulltime weekly earnings in the public sector.[63] Chart 4 demonstrates the extent of low salary levels of surveyed workers in the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors.

Chart 4: Annual gross salary by sector[64]
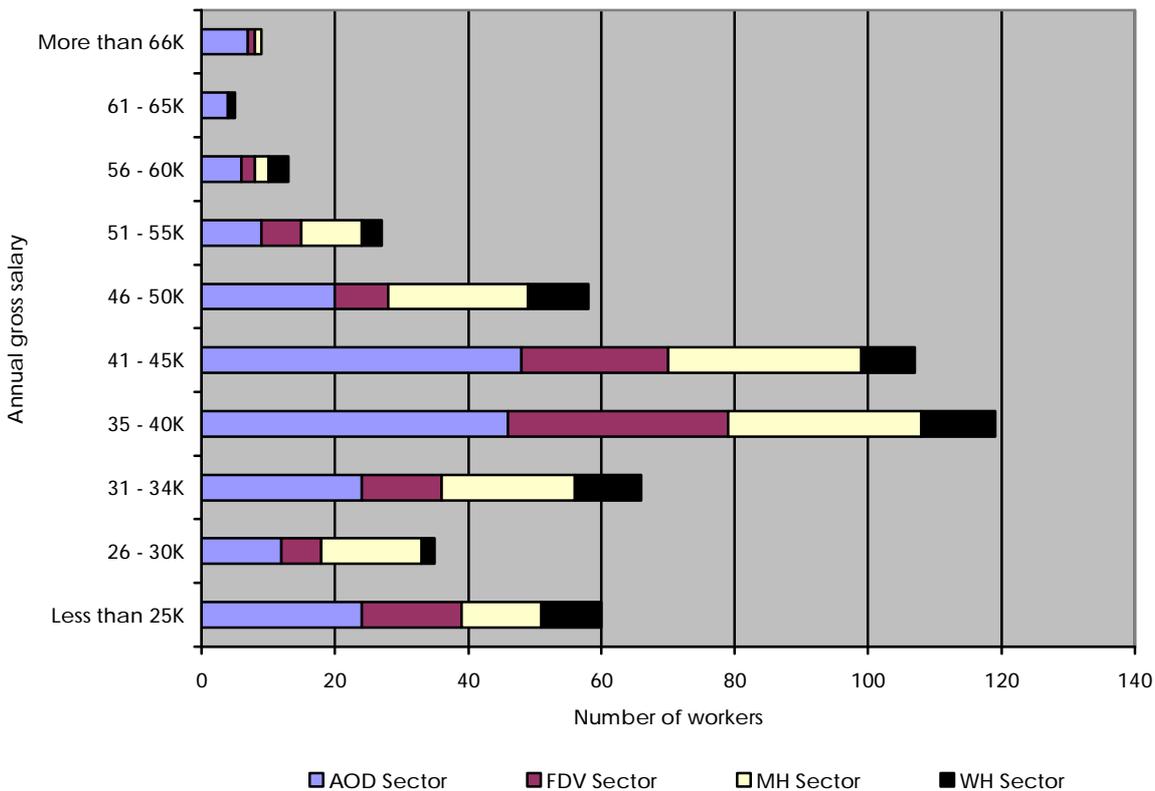
In February 2008, the average adult full-time weekly earnings for public sector workers were $1255.40.[65] In comparison, only 2% of survey respondents in the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors in WA earn above this amount.

§   19% of the sector respondents earn an annual fulltime salary of 30K or less ($576.92 per week).

§   50% of the sector respondents earn an annual fulltime salary of 40K or less (max of $769.23 per week).

[63] ABS. (2007). Key National Indicators: Income March Quarter 2008. Cat. no. 1345.0. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/productsbytitle/128C5FB23A7F8BDFCA25733E0012C862?OpenDocument
[64] *Source: 2007 Sector Remuneration Survey of AOD, FDV, MH and WH Sectors in WA*
[65] ABS. (2007). Key National Indicators: Income March Quarter 2008. Cat. no. 1345.0. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/productsbytitle/128C5FB23A7F8BDFCA25733E0012C862?OpenDocument

§   82% of the sector respondents earn an annual fulltime salary of 50K or less (max of $961.54 per week).

AWARDS USED IN THE SECTORS

The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* found that the two most commonly used Awards across the sectors were the SACS Award (used by 43 agencies) and the CASH Award (used by 21 agencies).

Workplace Agreements were used by only four agencies and Collective Agreements were used by three agencies.

Across the sectors, 92% of respondent agencies were therefore under the jurisdiction of Award systems.

An interesting result from *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* was the wide range of salaries paid to workers with the same job title. Further analysis did not find any strong correlations between level of salary and either length of time in position, age or length of time in sector. A moderate correlation was found between salary level and level of qualifications.

Chart 5 provides an example of two of the most commonly reported job titles by survey respondents and the range in salary levels for each.

Chart 5: Comparison of salary range for Counsellor and Refuge Support Worker positions in the sectors
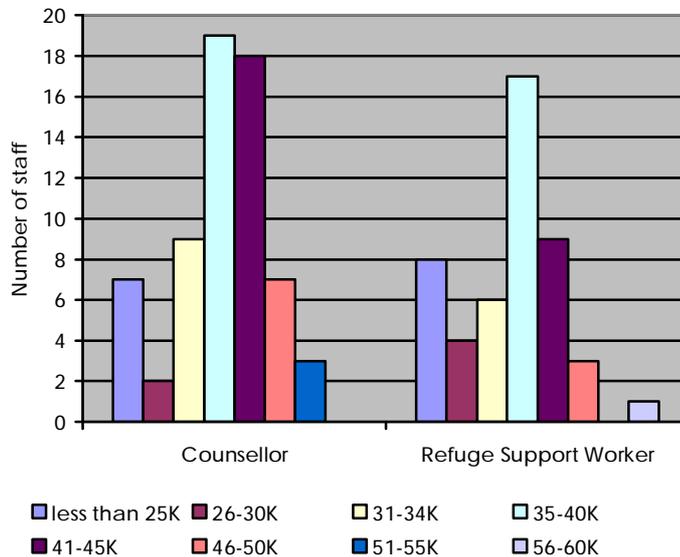
This trend provides a good example of the lack of standardised award conditions across the sector. However, it is also representative of the competitive context in which agencies currently operate where they must find a balance between attracting and retaining staff and being competitive in the tendering process.

SALARY PACKAGING

A public benevolent institution (PBI) is a non-profit institution organised for the direct relief of poverty, sickness, suffering, distress, misfortune, disability or helplessness.

Community service organisations that are entitled to PBI status are eligible for certain tax exemptions that can be used to provide benefits to employees. In short this means that an organisation with PBI status can "structure an employee's salary package so that the employee may effectively receive income from their employer that is not subject to income tax or fringe benefit tax."[66]

The Australian Services Union notes that in general, this type of salary packaging is underutilised by community service organisations.[67] This is most likely due to it being more compatible with larger organisations that have the personnel to manage the accounting and taxation requirements.

Results from the *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* of agency managers found that over a third of sector agency respondents offered PBI salary packaging schemes to at least management level.[68] Common items salary packaged included; motor vehicles (33%), self education (27%), meals and entertainment (26%), mobile phones (23%) and lap top computers (41%).

NON-WAGE REMUNERATION

Anecdotal evidence suggests that non-wage remuneration compensation of employees is becoming a popular strategy for employers to attract or retain scarce labour. [69]

WA's Department of Treasury and Finance reports that compensation of employees is a broader measure of remuneration than average earnings because it includes payments in kind such as meals, housing and child care.

Growth in the average compensation of employees has been much stronger than the growth in the Wage Price Index.[70] In 2007, total compensation of employees in Western Australia grew by 14.4% over the year. This compares to a growth of 7.7% for Australia.

Results from the *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* did not reflect such a strong uptake of non-remuneration strategies by agencies. 15 different types of non-remuneration benefits were offered by agencies. Table 7 provides a list of the most commonly offered non-remuneration benefits.

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[66]Australian Services Union. (2007, p. 17). Australian Services Union Discussion Paper. Building Social Inclusion in Australia: Priorities for the social and community services sector. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.asu.asn.au/media/building-social-inclusion2007.pdf

[67]Australian Services Union. (2007). Australian Services Union Discussion Paper. Building Social Inclusion in Australia: Priorities for the social and community services sector. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://www.asu.asn.au/media/building-social-inclusion2007.pdf

[68] The survey question did not stipulate whether PBI salary packaging benefits were made available to all staff or only senior level staff.

[69] Resource-rich states still enjoying the boom. (2008, January 23). The Age.

[70] Government of Western Australia; Department of Treasury and Finance. (2008). Western Australia Economic Summary No 1. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.dtf.wa.gov.au/cms/uploadedFiles/2008_no_1_wa_economic_summary.pdf

Table 7: Range of commonly offered non-remuneration benefits in the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors

Type of benefit offered	No of agencies offering benefit
Use of Car	25
Mental Health Day	12
Grief time for Aboriginal Workers	22
Housing	3
Education and Training	4
Fitness Programs & Gym membership	4

Aside from the most commonly offered benefits, it was usual for agencies to offer many additional benefits. It was also notable, given the high proportion of female workers in the sectors that only one agency offered child care services to their employees.

Another notable fact was that no single agency offered an extensive list of benefits to their employees.

Having a limited range of non-remuneration compensation seems in contradiction to the current recruitment and retention crisis in the sectors. However, if viewed in the context of inadequate funding, there may be little scope for agencies to currently offer their employees any additional benefits, or available staff resources to administer them.

DISPARITY BETWEEN PUBLIC SERVICE AND NON-GOVERNMENT REMUNERATION LEVELS

With 92% of respondent agencies relying on award rates, the wages for a significant proportion of survey respondents have fallen progressively behind those of WA Public Sector employees.

The widening gap in wages between the Public Sector and the not-for-profit Community Service Sector, impacts directly on the ability of the community sector to attract and retain appropriate workers.

It is commonplace in the Community Service Sector to hear of agencies losing workers to the higher paying Public Sector. It is becoming increasingly difficult for non-government not-for-profit agencies to compete with the Public Sector for staff and to be able to offer similar conditions of employment.

The pay disparity between positions of similar scope and responsibility in the Public Sector and the Community Service Sector can differ by up to $22,000 per year. With a continued dependence on awards for wages in the community sector, there is

widespread concern in the Community Service Sector that the gap in wages between the two sectors will continue to grow.[71]

Table 8: Comparison of salary disparity between similar positions in the Public Service Sector and the Community Service Sector.

| Sally Community Drug Service Team Counsellor | | | Julie Community Drug Service Team Counsellor | | |
| Community Service Sector SACS Award | | | Public sector WA Health – HSU Award 2006 and Health Services Union – WA Health State Industrial Agreement 2006 | | |
Award	% increase	Salary	Agreement	% increase	Salary
2003 SACS Level 5.1	2% Safety Net Review Effective 20.06.03	$38,960	2003 HSOA Level 3/5.1[72]	2% Effective 06.08.03	$41,740
2004 SACS Level 5.2	2.47% Safety Net Review Effective 20.06.04	$41,039	2004 HSOA Level 3/5.2[73]	3.4% Effective 18.01.04	$43,232
2005 SACS Level 5.3	2.11% Safety Net Review Effective 20.06.05	$42,910	2005 HSOA Level 3/5.3[74]	3.5% Effective 01.01.05	$47,406
2006 SACS Level 5.3	2.4% Fair Pay Com. Effective 01.12.06	$43,926	2006 HSU Level 4/6.4	1.65% Effective 01.01.06 4.5% Effective 01.07.06	$51,238 $56,585
2007 SACS Level 5.3	0.6% Fair Pay Com. Effective 01.10.07	$44,203	2007 HSU Level 4/6.5	4% Effective 01.07.07	$63,679

Table 8 demonstrates how over a period of 5 years, the salary gap between Public and Community Service Sectors has widened. Sally and Julie both began working as AOD Counselors in 2003. They had similar qualifications and experience. However, over 5 years:

§   Julie has earned $38,930 more salary than Sally

§   Julie has accumulated $3504 more super than Sally

In 2008 their salaries differ by $19,476. This is despite the fact that they are working the same number of hours per week, with similar responsibilities and using similar skills.

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[71] In 2006 the ACT Community Sector Taskforce released a comprehensive 97 page report entitled *Towards a Sustainable Community Sector in the ACT* which strongly presented this argument. The report is available online at http://www.psm.act.gov.au/publications/TowardsSustainableCommunityServicesSectorACT.pdf

[72] Due to the reclassification of health professionals in the public service in 2005, workers were back paid from 2003 to the equivalent of the new 4/6.1 health professional pay scale.

[73] Due to the reclassification of health professionals in the public service in 2005, workers were back paid from 2004 to the equivalent of the new 4/6.2 health professional pay scale.

[74] Due to the reclassification of health professionals in the public service in 2005, workers were back paid from 2005 to the equivalent of the new 4/6.3 health professional pay scale.

Table 9: Comparison of remuneration levels of recently advertised positions in the government and non-government sector

WA Community Service Sector	Salary Disparity	WA Public Sector
Counsellor/Educator Level 4/5 SACS Location: Metropolitan area $37,208 – $44,335 Provides a range of duties with both a treatment and prevention focus, including work with corrective services clients.	Disparity from $4,809 to $13,274	Counsellor Level 2/4 GOSAC Location: Metropolitan area $42,017 - $57,609 As a member of recruitment pool to cover a telephone counselling service, providing information, counselling, advice and referral.
Workforce Development Project Officer Level 6.1 SACS Location: Metropolitan area $45,424 Responsible for the implementation and evaluation of a range of educational workshops.	Disparity from $9,086 to $12,185	Workforce Development Officer Level 4 GOSAC Location: Metropolitan area $54,510 - $57,609 Responsible for the delivery of workforce development initiatives.

Table 9 clearly demonstrates the extent of disparity between remuneration levels in the government and non-government sectors. The salary gap is further widened when annual incremental increases are not provided to Community Service Sector employees.

SUPERANNUATION

The pay disparity between the Public Service and Community Service Sectors also brings with it an increasing inequity in superannuation savings of workers between the two sectors. This factor is very evident in table 10 which demonstrates the differing superannuation outcomes between a public service AOD worker and a community service AOD worker.

Table 10: Comparison of superannuation accumulated by equivalent positions in the Public Service and Community Service Sectors

AOD Worker in not-for-profit Community Service Sector		AOD Worker in public service sector	
Current super balance	$50,000	Current super balance	$50,000
Current age	45	Current age	45
Age planning to retire	60	Age planning to retire	60
Number of years in position	5	Number of years in position	5
AWARD	SACS Level 5.3	AWARD	HSU Level 4/6.5
Current annual salary before tax	$44,203	Current annual salary before tax	$63,679
Estimated balance at retirement	$166,000	Estimated balance at retirement	$198,000

Note: Results of calculation in today's dollars. Default rate of return 7%. Rate of inflation 2.5%. Award levels calculated assuming incremental increases have been awarded to both workers as per the scope of their respective awards/agreements.

Many workers in the Community Service Sector face the prospect of having inadequate retirement income. This is primarily due to the high numbers of casual and part time positions and the low levels of remuneration paid in the sector. Women, who make up nearly 80% of the sector workforce, are further disadvantaged because due to societal demands, they often do not have the capacity to work as many hours as men.[75] There is also less likelihood that lower paid workers will make voluntary contributions to their superannuation.

Diana Olsberg argues that "essentially superannuation is not a retirement issue ... but a workplace issue."[76] A significant increase in remuneration levels is the key factor to ensuring that the retirement income needs of the Community Service Sector workforce are met.

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[75] On average, Australian men have accumulated nearly twice the amount of superannuation savings than women. In 2006 the average superannuation account balance for a male was $69050, whilst the average balance for women was $35,520. Source: The Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia (ASFA) Research and Resource Centre. (2008, Feb). Retirement Savings Update. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.superannuation.asn.au/Reports/default.aspx

[76] D. Olsberg. (2002). Women and Retirement Savings: Ways forward? Lessons from overseas initiatives and Australian initiatives. Accessed June 18, 2008 from http://evatt.org.au/news/34.html

LONG SERVICE LEAVE

Respondents to the 2007 Sector Remuneration Survey identified long service leave portability as an issue.

The Long Service Leave Act 1958 (WA), regulates long service leave for all Western Australian employees including those covered by Awards, EBAs, Employer and Employee Agreements, or the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993. However, some constitutional corporations covered by State awards and industrial agreements are not covered by the Act.[77]

As of 4 July 2006, employees are entitled to take 8 ⅔ weeks of paid leave after 10 years of continuous service. For every 5 years of continuous service after this initial 10 years, employees are entitled to another 4 ⅓ weeks of paid leave. Employees are entitled to a proportionate entitlement on termination after 7 years of continuous service.

Long service leave entitlement is the same for Community Service Sector workers as for workers in other sectors. However the reality of working in the Community Service Sector means that very few workers actually qualify for long service leave under the existing arrangements.

Factors contributing to this include:

§   The high turnover of staff in the Community Service Sector. This affects workers' ability to accrue entitlements that are determined on continuity of service with one employer.

§   In order to develop their career, workers are likely to change jobs and be employed by a range of organisations.

§   As most Community Service Sector workers are women, many would have taken a break from employment to focus on family and other responsibilities.

§   The nature of competitive tendering means that many positions are tied to contracts. When contracts come to an end, the positions under the contract will also cease. This means some contract workers may only be in positions for as little as 12 months.

Recently, discussion has been growing about the possibility of implementing a system for the portability of long service leave in the Community Service Sector.[78] There is a

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[77] Those constitutional corporations covered by State awards and industrial
agreements, which expressly referred to the Long Service Leave General Order (LSL General Order), prior to the enactment of the *Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Act 2005* on 27 March 2006 will still have their long service leave entitlement governed by the LSL General Order i.e. 13 weeks' after 15 years' continuous service. This is because the terms and conditions in these instruments now known as notional agreements preserving State awards (NAPSAs) and preserved State agreements, were preserved from this date. Source: Department of Consumer and Employment Protection, Labour Relations. (2008, Jan). Long Service Leave. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/LabourRelations/PDF/Misc/Long_service_leave.pdf

[78] The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Community Sector Taskforce released a report in July 2006 entitled *'Towards a sustainable community service sector in the ACT.'* The report included a comprehensive analysis of options for portability of long service leave schemes for the ACT Community Service Sector (see footnote 74 for source); Families Australia released a Working Paper in October 2007 entitled *'Key challenges facing the not-for-profit community sector.'* The paper included the suggestion that a scheme for transferring long service leave entitlements between employers be adopted. The report is available at http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au/publications/pubs/challengesfacingnfpcommunitysector.pdf; The Australian Services Union commissioned a Discussion Paper in April 2007 entitled *'Building social cohesion in Australia: Priorities*
        (footnote continued)

growing argument that a portability of long service leave scheme will improve conditions and encourage workers to remain in the industry.

Portable long service leave means a worker can accumulate their long service leave whilst employed or engaged to work within an industry sector, rather than having to remain under the employment of a single employer.

Nationally, the building and construction, coalmining and stevedoring industries have portability of long service leave schemes. The contract cleaning industry in the ACT and Queensland also have portable long service schemes.

There are no current projections on the numbers of Community Service Sector workers who will be eligible for long service leave. In 2003, the Queensland branch of the Australian Services Union estimated that one in sixteen 'service' workers would be eligible for long service leave.[79]

The absence of data in relation to long service leave accrual in WA's Community Service Sector makes it difficult to make any comparisons with other industries. The first step towards considering the implementation of such a scheme would therefore involve gathering data to establish the status of accrued long service leave in the Community Service Workforce in WA.

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for the social and community services sector workforce.' The paper discussed the issues that are arising in regards to long service leave in the community service sector. (see footnote 70 for source)

[79] Australian Services Union, Queensland. (2003, March). Submission; Portable long service leave. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.asuqld.asn.au/pdfs03/plslsubmission03march2003.pdf

6.3   Recruitment and Retention in the Sectors

Any sector that is faced with growing service demand combined with a declining workforce will face recruitment challenges. The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) argues that "in the Community Services Sector this problem is exacerbated by a poor image of the sector as a place to work (real or perceived) and difficulty in retaining staff."[80]

One does not have to look far to see why this might be so. What attraction is there for people to spend time and money on gaining qualifications, to work in a sector that is well known for offering low salaries coupled with increasingly stressful and complex workloads?

For similar amounts of time and money, workers can obtain qualifications in other industries and begin work on a starting salary that is often on the same scale as a senior manager in the Community Service Sector.

Managers of community service organisations are constantly juggling the demands of ongoing recruitment strategies alongside of trying to retain their existing staff. There is increasing frustration in the sector around the amount of cost and time that is spent on recruitment. This is being felt particularly hard by the smaller sized agencies with no dedicated human resource personnel on staff.

There are many anecdotal stories of people being recruited for jobs, only to give notice 2 or 3 weeks later citing that they have found a higher paid position elsewhere. Often the higher paid positions that they are referring to are in the Public Sector. Sometimes agencies have gone through the advertising/ hiring/ induction process three times just to fill a single position. These difficulties have resulted in escalating recruitment costs throughout much of the Community Service Sector.

STAFF TURNOVER

Staff turnover can be a costly exercise for employers, especially when it involves the loss of workers whom employers would prefer to keep. In addition to direct recruitment costs, indirect costs of staff turnover include lost productivity, lost investment in training and development, payout commitments, decreased worker morale and increased stress.[81]

The high staff turnover rate in the Community Service Sector is heavily impacting on the quality and range of services provided. High turnover is adding to already untenably long waiting lists in areas such as accommodation and residential services. It also contributes to extra workloads being placed on remaining workers, thereby increasing the incidence of stress and burnout. All of these factors can act as powerful deterrents for attracting new workers into the Community Service Sector.

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[80] Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS). (2007, p. 5). Recruitment and Retention in the Community Sector: A snapshot of current concerns, future trends and workforce strategies Victorian Council of Social Service. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.ncoss.org.au/projects/workforce/downloads/RecruitVCOSSpaper07.doc
[81] Barak, M. E. M., Nissly, J. A., & Levin, A. (2001). Antecedents to retention and turnover among child welfare, social work, and other human service employees: What can we learn from past research? A review and meta-analysis. *Social Science Review,*75(4), 625-661.

The Australian Community Sector Survey 2007 reported that the national average staff turnover across the respondent agencies was 14.3%. For the respondent agencies in Western Australia, the average turnover was 21%. This is a disturbingly high figure considering that the all Australian Industry average is between 10% and 12%.[82]

Although no comparative figures are available from the *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey*, across 84 respondent agencies a total of 253 staff have left in the past two years indicating that better pay elsewhere was a key factor for leaving.[83] This figure does not represent the total staff turnover across the four sectors; it is only inclusive of those who left citing low remuneration as the main reason for leaving.

It is impossible to predict how many of these 253 staff would have stayed if the positions they held offered higher salaries. However, this figure presents a strong argument for the damage low remuneration levels are currently inflicting on the sectors. Low remuneration levels must shoulder a large amount of the blame for the declining workforce and recruitment challenges currently being experienced.

INTENTION TO STAY

Turnover intention has been identified as having the highest predictive power of actual turnover.[84] The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* found that:

- §   35% of workers do not expect to be working in the sector in 2 years time.
- §   74% of workers do not expect to be working in the sector in 5 years time.

In terms of numbers of people, this represents a potential loss of 182 of the respondents across the four sectors in Western Australia within two years.

There is also evidence of increased mobility in the sectors with nearly a third of workers having two or more job changes in the past two years. Further analysis on job mobility shows that there is a higher incidence of job mobility for:

- §   Workers in the AOD and MH sectors.
- §   Workers on salaries under 35K.
- §   Workers who have been in the sector less than 2 years.
- §   Workers under 25 years of age.

RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

In the January 2006 Not-For-Profit Industry Survey Report, over two thirds of respondents cited lack of candidates as a major problem in the recruitment process.[85]

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[82] Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS). (2007, Feb). Paper 145: Australian Community Sector Survey. Accessed July 7, 2008, from
http://www.acoss.org.au/upload/news/2102__Community%20Sector%20Survey%202007.pdf
[83] These results do not include one large organisation which reported that over a two year period, 250 staff had left citing low remuneration as the key factor for leaving.
[84] Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W. & Gaertner, S. (2000). A meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover: Update, moderator tests, and research implications for the next millennium, Journal of Management, 26, 463-488.
[85] Challenge Consulting. (2006). Not-For-Profit Industry Survey Report. Accessed July 7, 2008, from
http://www.challengeconsulting.com.au/documents/Not-For-Profit_Industry_Survey_Report.pdf

The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* asked managers to rate their success at replacing workers on current wages and conditions. Nearly half of agency managers rated their recruitment success as having no success at all or being unsatisfactory.

76% of agency managers reported receiving 5 or less applicants for advertised positions. Within this figure, 38% reported having 2 or less applicants applying for positions. In order to fill positions, many agencies reported that they had accepted less qualified staff. In some instances the newly recruited worker was educated by the agency and had consequently left for a higher paying position.

The consistent lack of job applicants is a strong indication of just how serious an issue the diminishing workforce pool in the Community Service Sector has become. This problem has been further aggravated by the disparity in wage levels between the public and not-for-profit Community Service Sectors. Here is a recent recruitment story from the sector.

A recruitment story from the Mental Health Sector

"Our organisation was offering an annual salary for a full time worker at around $48 - 50,000 for a mental health worker. The position included access to NGO salary packaging arrangements; access to good training opportunities; regular clinical supervision and on-the-job training; mileage allowance for vehicle and excellent support.

We initially attracted a staff member who came from the Govt Sector. After an interview process comprising 3 senior staff members; a 2 week orientation with approximately 15 members of staff taking time to discuss their work and 2 weeks of my time as program manager inducting her into the position she resigned partly because her salary had dropped considerably from the level she received in the Mental Health Govt Sector.

Since then we have advertised 3 times for the position with advertisements in the local Peel newspapers; an advertisement in the West Australian and on 2 websites. We have had very limited response with only one suitable applicant who withdrew one day before the interview process - again citing a drop in salary.

I would estimate that my time alone on this has amounted to about 30 hours; my Manager's time - probably 5 hours and staff who offered to assist with the induction for the first appointee around 15 hours.   Our Admin staff member who has coordinated advertising has spent about 5 hours on the process.   Our IT staff also spent around 5 hours setting up the phone and computer systems."

RETAINING STAFF

A study by Mercer Human Resource Consulting[86] conducted in Australia in 2003 revealed that the most important attributes Australian employees value about their job were:

§   the existence of opportunities for advancement;

§   training; and

§   a clear career path.

The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* found that these attributes were also important for the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sector workforces. However, the most reported on conditions required for workers to remain in the sector were higher levels of remuneration and changes to award conditions. Another factor heavily reported on by the sector workforce was the need for workers to either have their workloads reduced or to have additional staff employed to ease the pressure.

There have been several studies recently conducted in Australia that have shown the tendency for surveyed managers to report that satisfactory remuneration was the key factor in retaining workers.[87] The studies have also shown that when workers are surveyed, the majority have placed more importance on opportunities for promotion and the existence of clear career paths than remuneration.

Chart 6 shows the most common topics reported by the *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* respondents in response to the question:

 "What conditions would need to be in place for you to extend your employment at the organisation or in the sector?"[88]

There was a strong response to this question with nearly 600 comments from workers. Reflecting the caring philosophy that motivates many people to work in the sector, most comments were coupled with expressed concern for the reduced capacity of service provision and for the outcomes of clients.

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[86] People Pulse. (n.d.). Employee engagement. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.peoplepulse.com.au/Employee-Engagement.
[87] People Pulse. (n.d.). Employee engagement. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.peoplepulse.com.au/Employee-Engagement.
[88] Sector refers to either the AOD, FDV, MH or WH sectors in WA

Chart 6: Comments from staff re conditions required to continue working in the sectors
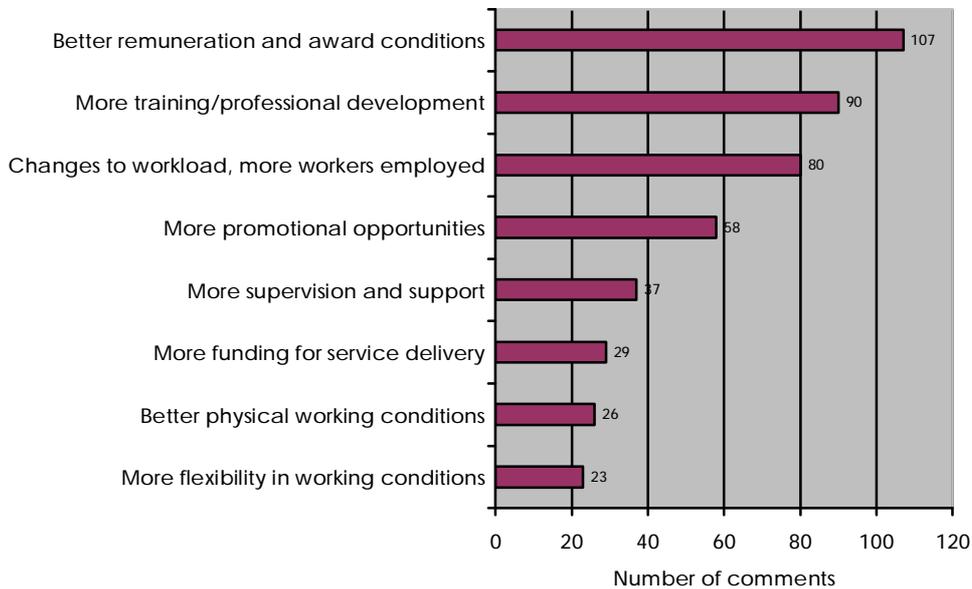
The comments tabled below demonstrate the far reaching impact that unsatisfactory pay and work conditions has on the lives, identities and attitudes of workers in the Community Service Sector.

"What conditions would need to be in place for you to extend your employment at the organisation or in the sector?

"………. a salary increase commensurate with experience and training required for the position - having no salary increase since I began employment is not comparable with other similar positions in government sector - I have a second job (in an unrelated field)."

"……….need some time off - feeling burnt out."

"……….my pay should reflect my academic and professional experience. Currently my HECs and PELs debt is about 28K and to be paid 44K per year is a real insult. I have a multitude of experience and passion, yet it isn't reflected in my pay."

"What conditions would need to be in place for you to extend your employment at the organisation or in the sector?

"..........increased wages - I can barely meet my expenses."

"..........an increase in wages so that it's comparative with government sector and/or average male wage so that I can afford to live in Perth."

"..........if I could move up levels, I can't go any further than where I am currently at."

"..........further opportunities for increased pay to acknowledge changing/merging roles."

"...........acknowledgement of the level of emotional stress on workers where they deal with victims of domestic violence."

"...........a MINIMUM annual salary of $69,500 ie currently receive .64 of HSDA equivalent (or = to gardener/cleaner) and within the year."

"..........acknowledgement of specialist skills / experience and knowledge."

"..........a pay rise - it seems like as my knowledge and abilities increase my pay has decreased."

This is perhaps where the Community Service Sector workforce crisis differs from recruitment and retention issues in other sectors. Here, there is clear agreement between employers and employees that remuneration is the key factor influencing worker's intentions to remain in the sector.

6.4   Worker Stress in the Sectors

Although not succinctly stated in any job description, if there were a section which described the sector working environment, it would probably read .... acute consumer demand for service, clients presenting with multiple issues, most staff exceeding well-over workload limits, limited funding to cater for client and workforce needs...

It is therefore no surprise to find that the incidence of worker stress and burnout in the Community Service Sector is high. There has been a significant amount of research conducted in this area. Recent studies in the AOD sector have found that one in five AOD workers reported above average levels of stress.[89] Research has shown that predictors of high work stress include; role overload, low job autonomy, high client related pressure, low workplace social support and low professional development opportunities.

WORKER STRESS AND BURNOUT IN THE SECTORS

In the *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey*, 75% of respondents reported always, often or sometimes having difficulty in managing their current workload. A third of these workers reported that they often or always had difficulty.

45 of respondent agencies had workers who had left their organisation in the last two years indicating stress and/or burnout was a key factor for leaving. Collectively, agencies reported that a total of 123 workers had resigned as a result of stress or burnout in the past two years. Of this figure nearly half worked in the AOD sector. These results do not include one large organisation which reported over a two year period that over 30 staff had left citing stress and burnout as a key factor for leaving.

As noted in Section 5, stress and burnout can be costly for agencies as a result of increased sick leave, costs involved with replacement staff, increased workers compensation premiums, provision of external support and counselling for staff, loss of productivity, workers compensation claims and training requirements.

The increasing incidence of stress and burnout in the Community Service Sector is placing increasing demands on services which are predominantly funded for service delivery and not on funding contracts that allow for the associated on-costs of a high stress work environment.

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[89] National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA). (2006). *Satisfaction, stress and retention among alcohol and other drug workers in Australia.* Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.nceta.flinders.edu.au/projects/workforce_development/documents/SSR_book_final.pdf

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) are becoming increasingly more common in today's worksites. An EAP is a confidential counselling service for employees and their eligible dependents who may be experiencing personal or work place problems.

EAPs are intended to help employees deal with work related or personal problems that might adversely impact their work performance, health, and well-being. EAPs typically provide assessment, support, and if needed, referrals to additional resources. The cost is usually borne by the employer, with a limit to the number of support sessions an employee can access. Employers gain by reducing the amount of personal time off taken by employees and availability of an EAP demonstrates an employer's recognition of the pressures associates with working in the sector.

Overall, 61% of agencies in the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors reported that EAPs were available to their employees. The majority of these were located within the Perth metropolitan area. Out of 27 respondent agencies in rural or regional areas only 5 offered their employees access to an Employee Assistance Program.

This clearly indicates the crucial lack of support services in relation to stress and burnout issues for non-metropolitan sector workers. The incidence of stress and burnout in rural, regional and remote workers is equal to and in some instances higher than in community service workers in the metropolitan area. Lack of support services for workers may therefore be a contributing factor to the growing scarcity of workers in non-metropolitan areas.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Another indicator of the potential for stress and burnout in the workplace is the frequency of occurrence of critical incidents.

The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* defined a critical incident as *'involving violence or threat of violence against staff while at work in person or on the phone, or responding to suicidal incidents.'* Respondent agencies were asked to provide the number of critical incidents that had occurred in their organisation in the past 6 months.

Chart 7: Number of critical incidents recorded by respondent agencies in past 6 months
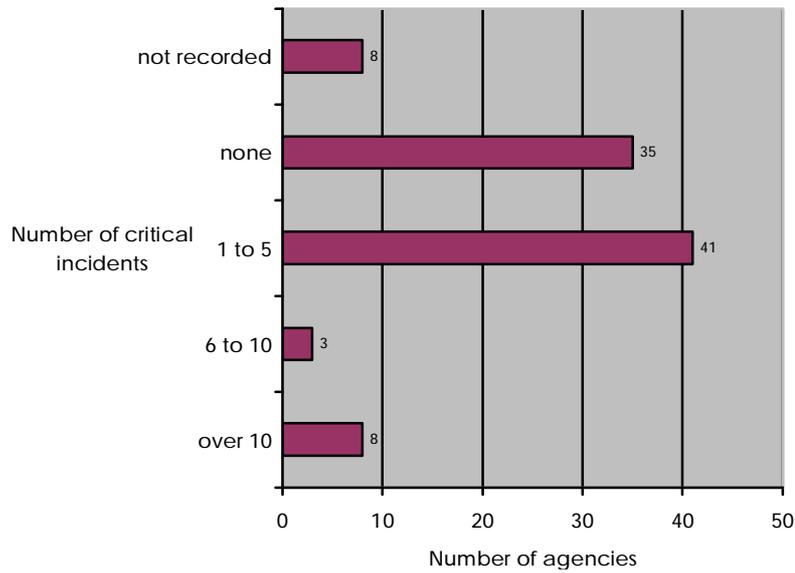
These results show that for a number of agencies, critical incidents involving the threat of violence or suicide are occurring on a regular basis. Of the eight agencies recording 10 or more critical incidents over the past 6 months, 4 were from the AOD sector, 2 were from the MH sector and 2 were from the FDV sector. The survey results found that critical incidents occurred in similar frequency across the four sectors.

6.5   Worker Satisfaction in the Sectors

Research has shown that high levels of job satisfaction are related to lower staff turnover rates.[90] Satisfied workers are also more likely to perform to a higher standard.

A recent study conducted in the AOD sector found that the top-ranked job satisfaction related aspects of work were;[91]

§   successful outcomes for clients,

§   one-to-one client interaction,

§   doing work of value to society,

§   opportunities for personal learning and growth,

§   relationship with co-workers,

§   salary/benefits, and

§   career growth.

JOB SATISFACTION ACROSS SECTORS

The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* found that 87% of workers across the four sectors reported feeling satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs in the past 2 years.

Chart 8: Job satisfaction across the sectors
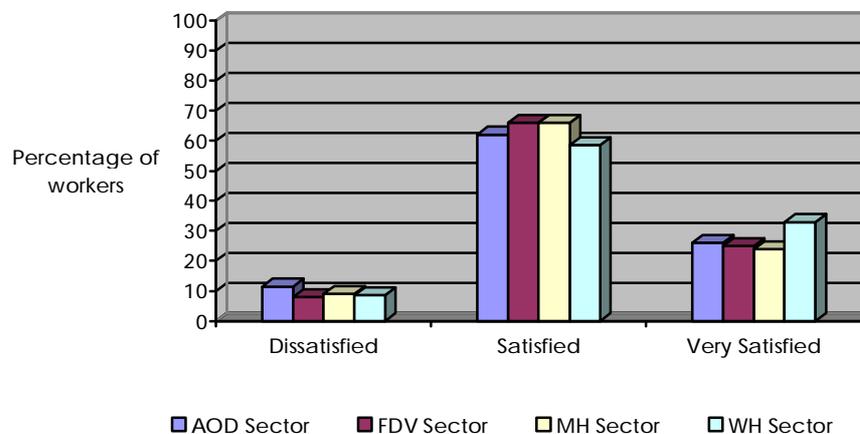
An analysis of the survey results found a significant correlation between worker dissatisfaction and promotional opportunities. An average of 10% of workers across all age groups expressed dissatisfaction with their job.

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[90] Tett, R. P., & Meyer, J. P. (1993). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and turnover: Path analyses based on meta-analytic findings. *Personnel Psychology, 46*, 259-293.
[91] National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA). (2006). Satisfaction, stress and retention among alcohol and other drug workers in Australia. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.nceta.flinders.edu.au/projects/workforce_development/documents/SSR_book_final.pdf

39% of surveyed workers who expressed dissatisfaction with their job also reported that they intended to leave the sector in the next 12 months. Of these workers, 84% felt that there were no promotional opportunities for them.

In comparison, only 10% of workers who reported satisfaction with their job were contemplating leaving the sector in the next 12 months.

These results reflect the trend for community service workers to change jobs in order to become promoted. This is often forced by the nature of fixed term contract funding that only provides for a specific job role to complete a project.

The results however, remain important to the development of future workforce retention strategies in the sectors. The significant correlation between job satisfaction, intention to remain in the sector and promotional opportunities available to workers cannot be ignored.

Workforce development strategies are needed which connect job satisfaction monitoring processes to the establishment of clear career paths. This will help to retain workers who currently feel disenfranchised with the lack of promotional opportunities in the sectors and to attract new workers into the sectors.

6.6   Training and Support in the Sectors

Investment in training is essential to the long term viability of the Community Service Sector. Adequate training and support brings increased levels of competency, recognition and motivation in workers.[92] Provision of relevant and accessible training and support can also be an effective retention strategy.

The Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) has taken a leading role in facilitating sector wide discussion and collaboration around issues affecting the Community Service Sector's viability. WACOSS has called on governments to invest in sector training and respond to the specific training needs of agencies through increased funding, support and coordination.

WACOSS also calls for government funding directed at training to cover the costs of providing services to clients,(such as back fill of staff) whilst staff attend training programs.

ACCESSIBILITY OF TRAINING AND SUPPORT

2007 Sector Remuneration Survey respondents repeatedly mentioned the accessibility of training and support as an issue of concern to them. Workers commented that alongside of the provision of training, both financial and backfill support was required to help them participate in training. Lack of support was found to be a major issue for rural, regional and remote workers in accessing training opportunities.

These comments are indicative of the problems with staff backfill in the Community Service Sector. A declining workforce has made it extremely difficult for agencies to

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[92] Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS). (2006). Discussion Paper: Smart moves forward. Accessed July 6, 2008, from http://wacoss.org.au/images/assets/publications_papers/smart_moves_forward_sept2006.pdf

find temporary staff to relieve workers so that they can attend training. Although agencies commonly incorporate the cost of back fill into tender applications, the reality is that there is often no-one available to undertake the work.

PROVISION OF TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Across the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors in the past 12 months, 60% of survey respondents had been provided with internal training and support; 49% had received internal supervision; 50% had undertaken external training and 38% had received professional development opportunities.
Chart 9 shows the percentage of workers in the sectors who had received training and support in the past 12 months.

Chart 9: Percentage of workers in each sector that had received training and support in the past 12 months
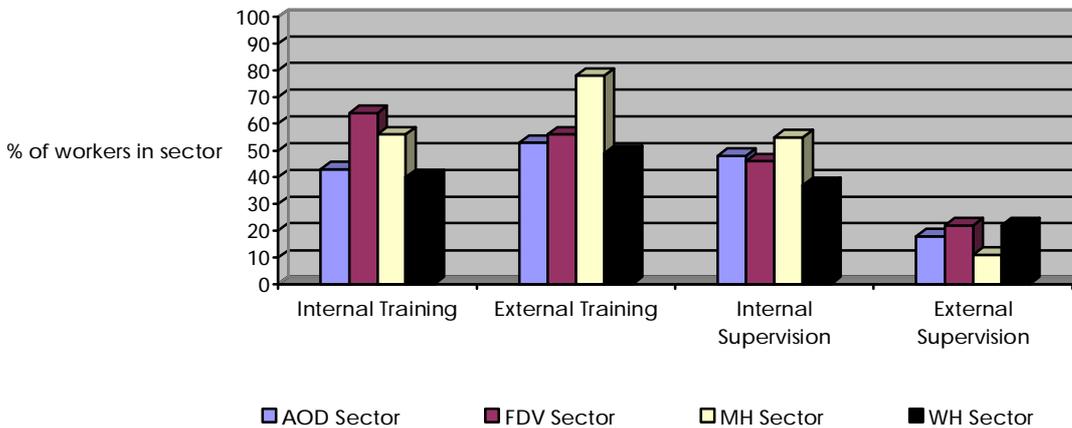

Table 11 demonstrates the inequities in the utilisation and accessibility of training and support between remote, metropolitan and regional workers.

The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* results show that only one in four remote workers had accessed internal supervision in the past 12 months. One in 20 remote workers had accessed external supervision in the past year, compared with a ratio of one in five metropolitan workers.

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Table 11: Comparison between proportion of workers who have received training in the past 12 months and location

Work location	% of workers who have received internal training and support in the past 12 months
Metropolitan area	63%
Regional area	60%
Remote area	38%
Work location	% of workers who have received internal supervision in the past 12 months
Metropolitan area	53%
Regional area	44%
Remote area	26%

6.7   Youth in the Sectors

The number of *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* respondents under 25 years of age totaled 38, or 8% of the total respondents. This reflects the ageing community service workforce and the lack of young people entering the sector.

Although youth only represent a small proportion of the surveyed workforce, by way of necessity, future recruitment will be targeted at this group. It is in the interests of sector viability to be aware of both the needs of youth who may potentially enter the Community Service Sector workforce as well as the youth who are currently employed in the sector.

Recent research has highlighted the need for employers to adapt their retention strategies to suit the differing needs of younger workers. The 2004 Hudson Report[93] survey found that Generation Y[94] workers were most motivated by remuneration, benefits and higher level positions. This does not hold the Community Service Sector in good stead for attracting Generation Y workers, considering the poor remuneration and lack of promotional opportunities on offer at the moment.

[93] Hudson. (2004). The Hudson Report. Accessed July 7, 2008, from
http://au.hudson.com/documents/emp_au_january_march_2004_husdon_report_2.pdf
[94] Generation Y is the 4.5 million Australians born between 1978 and 1994

Other research has found that a growing number of organisations are modifying their recruitment and selection processes, employee training and reward and recognition programs to better cater for Generation Y.[95]

The *2007 Sector Remuneration Survey* found that the under 25 workforce in the sector is quite mobile. Of the respondents under 25 who have been in the sectors less than 2 years, 86% had changed jobs at least once.

59% of the under 25 workforce in the survey had tertiary qualifications. This compares to a sector average of 44.7%. Although the majority expressed satisfaction with their jobs, over half of this group (52%) did not expect to be working in their sector in 5 years time. This further supports the idea that the sector is viewed by some employees as a training ground for alternative future careers.

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[95] Ross Human Directions. (2007). Thriving (and surviving) with Gen Y. Accessed July 7, 2008, from http://www.rossjuliaross.com/files/200606ROSSNews_NAT.pdf

7   Implications for the future

There needs to be great consideration given to what the scenario might look like if no changes are made to improve the viability of the Community Service Sector.

What will be some of the implications for the AOD, FDV, MH and WH sectors if remuneration and award conditions stay the same? Who will ultimately bear the main brunt of these implications? What will be the result of a reduction in quantity and quality of services for those who are already disadvantaged in society?

7.1   Implications for Service Provision

§   Insufficient staff will result in lack of continuity in service provision.

§   The pool of specialist knowledge and skills contained in the sector will diminish as workers retire or leave the sector.

§   Lower qualified job candidates will require additional time for their induction and cost more to the employer in further training to enable them to fully meet the needs of the role.

§   As inadequate funding causes service provision to be confined to the immediate needs of clients, there will be decreased preventative and educational focused service provision.

§   Increasing numbers of the existing workforce suffering from stress and burnout will inflate compensation costs for agencies. Instead of being allocated for direct service provision, available funding will be used on compensation payouts, stress leave, sick leave and staff replacement expenses.

§   Service provision in regional, remote and rural areas not associated with the mining and resource boom will decline.

7.2   Implications for the Existing and Potential Workforce

§   With a lack of new workers entering the sector, the existing workforce will be increasingly vulnerable to stress and burnout.

§   Community service work will become further stigmatised as being overly stressful and demanding coupled with low remuneration. This will act as a huge deterrent for high school and university graduates considering working in the sector.

§   Many workers will have insufficient levels of superannuation accrued when they retire. They will be faced with either having to rely on pension support from the government or working past retirement age.

§   The Community Service Sector workforce will further decline as more workers leave in search of better remuneration and working conditions.

7.3   Implications for Government Services

§   As community services cannot cope with the increasing demand, there will be increased pressure on public sector services such as hospitals, emergency departments and health centres and clinics.

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§   A reduction in community services is also likely to put pressure on police services, corrective services and child protection services.

§   The Federal Government will be faced with providing pension support to a high proportion of community service workers when they reach retirement age.

7.4   Implications for the Community and Service Users

§   Reduced service provision coupled with increased client demand will impact the most on those who are the most disadvantaged in society. Clients may not have access to services or may be referred to inappropriate services. Reduced numbers of preventative and educational services will affect people who might be vulnerable to drug and alcohol or mental health issues. All of these factors could potentially increase the rate of:
   - Suicides
   - Homelessness
   - Family and domestic violence
   - Alcohol and drug use
   - Mental health issues
   - Mortality rates in Indigenous communities
   - Sexually transmissible infections including HIV and Hep C
   - Unsafe injection use
   - Law violations and increased rates of imprisonment and recidivism
   - Children at risk

§   As services in remote and rural areas decrease, clients in these areas will have less and less access to services.

§   Reduced services will result in families having to provide care and support for people with AOD, FDV or MH issues thereby increasing carer burden.

§   There will also be reduced support for families that are providing care.

§   As the level of service provision reduces, increased numbers of people will be turned away from services.

§   The Community Service Sector's role in the building of social capital in communities will lessen. This could ultimately threaten the social cohesion of our society.