



**Approaches to training and skills development  
for the community services sector**

**SACOSS Commissioned Report  
June 2010**

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Commissioned from SACOSS by the Community Connect Division of the Department for Families and Communities,  
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## **Executive Summary**

The report was commissioned from SACOSS by the Community Connect Division of the Department for Families and Communities (DFC) in December 2009.

The purpose of the project was to explore approaches to training and skills development for the South Australian community services sector. The focus was to be on improving access to training and development opportunities within and across the community services sector, and in relation to improving access to DFC provision of training. DFC was also interested in the exploring the effectiveness of web-based resources in improving access and in the value of setting up a sector-wide training network.

The consultation process revealed that these initial questions served to uncover more complex and contentious issues, in relation to networking and collaboration across government and non-government boundaries and within the non-government sector itself. Whilst there were positive responses to the idea of a customised web-based resource for the sector, it was not possible to find any consensus on the value of creating a sector-wide training network or on how access to DFC training resources might be improved. These latter issues, framed in this way, simply begged more questions.

In the light of the significant opportunity afforded by this project to listen and try to make sense of these dissonant views, the wide-ranging issues that were highlighted and the current internal review by DFC of its own training investment into the community services sector, a more comprehensive and strategic approach seems timely. Hence the recommendations made below go beyond the original limited focus of the project. The recommendations that address each of the original three project objectives have been embedded within the over-arching recommendation for a strategic approach to sector capacity building. This reflects the need for a collaborative approach which builds bridges between the government and non-government sectors.

The report makes no claim to be definitive or to try to create a consensus from the diverse, complex and competing perspectives that make up the views of those consulted on the issues explored herein. Rather its purpose is to represent the views that were expressed by the participants in this project in all their diversity, to acknowledge the challenge that this presents and to stimulate thinking and discussion about effective responses.

## ***Key recommendations to the Department for Families and Communities***

The following is a collation of the recommendations drawn from the body of the report and grouped under relevant headings.

### **1. Developing a strategic approach**

- 1.1 That the Department for Families and Communities acknowledges that its role as the principal purchaser of support services from non-government, not for profit organisations brings with it certain responsibilities which include resourcing the sector to ensure it has the capacity to deliver these services in a manner that meets the high quality service standards expected.
- 1.2 That DFC recognises that this will only be achieved by successfully partnering and working collaboratively with the sector so as to ensure the leadership and resources are available to achieve this.
- 1.3 That DFC uses its position to ensure other arms of government who seek the assistance of the non-government community services and health sectors appreciate the significance of the initiatives proposed by this report and seek to accommodate the issues identified in a consistent whole of government approach.
- 1.4 That DFC agrees, through the Human Services Peaks Forum, a collaborative process, in order to develop and articulate a strategic approach to building the capacity of the non-government community services sector to engage effectively with existing learning, training and skills development opportunities and to develop new initiatives that meet unmet or emergent needs.
- 1.5 That other stakeholders such as the SA Health and Community Services Skills Board, Registered Training Organisations, the College for Learning and Development, The Strong Community Healthy State Campaign and relevant government departments are invited to contribute to this process.
- 1.6 That particular attention is paid to the issues of access and equity in setting up and carrying out this process to facilitate the engagement of regional/rural organisations, Aboriginal and CALD groups and smaller community-based organisations
- 1.7 Within this over-arching process, further consideration is given to the value of establishing a sector-wide network as a mechanism for consultation and information-sharing.

### **2. Identifying the agenda**

That this should include, but not necessarily be limited to, consideration of the following:

- 2.1 Partnering with the sector in the creation of a sector-wide training and skills development plan, that is located within the context of current workforce development challenges facing the sector and aligns where appropriate with the evolving Health and Community Services Industry Workforce Action Plan 2010-2014.
- 2.2 Clarifying the purpose of the Department's internal review of its training remit and reviewing progress on that to date
- 2.3 Clarifying the role and appropriate scope of the Department's College for Learning and Development, in relation to providing training for the non-government community services sector
- 2.4 Exploring the recommendations relating to Government tenders, i.e.
  - the inclusion of baseline minimum standards for agreed levels of staff training and professional development, along with funding to support such a requirement
  - the additional costs incurred by regional and rural organisations in accessing training (which is frequently only available in metropolitan areas) be acknowledged and a sliding scale of costs be developed and factored into funding agreements

### **3. Immediate Departmental support:**

In tandem with, and as an integral component of, the longer-term strategic approach described above, it is recommended that action is taken on the following initiatives:

- 3.1 The Department supports the sector to establish a sector-wide web-based resource that is based on the VCOSS Clearinghouse model which is adequately resourced by administrative and coordination positions and located within the sector.
- 3.2 The Department supports the sector to complete a sector-wide training and development needs analysis.
- 3.3 The Department supports the sector to develop a series of relevant, well developed on-line learning packages in order to demonstrate the capacity and usefulness of online learning opportunities within the sector with a view to the expansion and strengthening of the range of such opportunities.

### ***Recommendations to other organisations***

#### **4. Linking training and development with workforce development**

- 4.1 That the Strong Community Healthy State Campaign Group and the SA Health and Community Services Skills Board set up an appropriate process for discussing and identifying areas of mutual interest in strategies for improving workforce attraction and retention, identified in the emerging Health and Community Services Industry Workforce Action Plan.
- 4.2 That SACOSS and the Health and Community Services Skills Board ensure that the specific training and workforce development needs and interests of people and organisations in regional and rural areas are consistently represented and/or taken into account.



## Introduction

As with the SACOSS Alternative Employment Models research project (Ogle & Bowling, 2010), the origins of this project lie in discussions held in the Strong Community Healthy State Campaign Group in 2009. A range of factors, impinging on the capacity of the community services sector workforce to recruit and retain skilled staff and hence to meet the needs of disadvantaged South Australians, were identified as problematic. One of these was access to training and skills development. Following submissions to the Minister for Families and Communities, a number of discrete projects were commissioned to explore these issues. Concurrently, the Community Connect Division of the Department (DFC) has been exploring the development of a more coordinated approach to the Departmental training program which it provides for the community services sector. Aspects of these two agendas were brought together in the particular focus of this project.

### Project purpose

The purpose of the project, as set out in the Department for Families and Communities Commissioned Research Agreement (DFC, 2009), was to explore approaches to training and skills development for the South Australian community services sector. In particular, the focus was to be on improving access to training and development opportunities within and across the community services sector, and in relation to improving access to DFC provision of training.

Three primary objectives were identified:

1. Explore the appropriateness of establishing a web-based model that details training resources and opportunities for the sector.
2. Liaise with peak bodies and other community organisations in South Australia that are actively engaged in organising and delivering training to establish the foundations for a sector-wide training network. Identify a wider group of organisations that have a general interest in and need for training, with a view to engagement at a later stage.
3. Identify opportunities to improve community sector access to Department for Families and Communities (DFC) training, through active exploration and planning with the new DFC Community Services Training project.

### Methodology

Whilst this report centrally addresses the original objectives identified, the project itself ranged both deeper and wider in its exploration of a number of inter-connected training and skills development issues. Indeed it would be difficult to discuss training and skills development without touching on areas such as staff attraction and retention and other workforce development issues, as well as the impact of short-term insecure funding on systematic planning for training. These issues surfaced throughout the consultation process, which involved discussion with a range of organisations and individuals from the sector.

This material has been included throughout the report. It is relevant to the primary objectives of the project and hopefully deepens our understanding of how to meet those objectives, revealing the diverse and sometimes competing perspectives prevalent in the sector. It also serves to remind us that a range of differentiated and sophisticated policy responses will be required to address these challenges.

The project used a qualitative and interpretative approach to the fieldwork, since the questions to be addressed did not lend themselves to a narrowly quantitative approach. It also adopted a consultative methodology, which was essential in terms of gathering views and perceptions from the key stakeholders and important in modelling the basis for continuing dialogue between the sector and the Department. Three half-day sector consultation events were held during the project, one in Adelaide and one each in the north and south of the region. Whilst the two regional events were reasonably well-subscribed, the metropolitan event had low attendance (5).

In order to supplement this, individual discussions were conducted with a sample of metropolitan community service sector organisations. These were selected to illustrate the perspective of four different sets of interest within the sector:

- Large service providing organisations
- Regional Training Organisations
- Peak bodies
- Smaller community-based organisations

Due to the constraints on the number of individual interviews that it proved possible to organise and conduct within each category and within the timeframe, the project did not manage to interview in depth any Aboriginal or CALD organisations. However briefer informal conversations were held with a representative from each of those these categories and have been incorporated into the report. However this is an area that needs rectifying given the additional barriers that frequently confront those organisations in accessing provision.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used as the starting point for the discussion, with the initial questions focused around these areas:

- Identify three key issues relating to training and skills development for your organisation. (Participants were asked to identify issues other than funding.)
- What do you think of the idea of a sector-wide network on training?
- What are the potential for and the limits of networking and collaboration on training-related issues across the whole of the community services sector?
- What do you think of the value of a web-based resource (such as the Victorian Council of Social Service Clearinghouse) for the sector?
- How could access to DFC training and skills development resources be improved?

These preliminary questions served as prompts to unearth other questions and concerns, which were incorporated into the discussions with new participants as the work progressed. This iterative process helped to build an evolving agenda of issues and interests, or 'natural agenda', reflecting the concerns that cropped up repeatedly and are clearly significant. It also offered the opportunity, throughout the consultation process, for both the project coordinator and the participants to broaden and refine their own views and understanding.

Although the material produced was rich and valuable, a more extensive investigation would clearly be important to include the perspectives that are missing and to widen the dialogue.

## **Terminology**

The project did not initially define more precisely the key terms 'training', 'skills development', 'sector', or 'network', assuming that these were self-evident and that there would be shared understandings about them. This was far from the case and was a source of some confusion. With hindsight, this should have been clarified early on. However if it became apparent that the terms were interpreted differently by participants, the project coordinator sought clarification during the conversation and explained the meaning that was intended in the context of the project.

### *Training and skills development*

In general, people chose to conceptualise and describe 'training' in its traditional sense – i.e. formally organised courses or events, delivered away from the workplace or less frequently on-site. Most participants indicated whether they were referring to accredited or non-accredited provision and distinguished between initial professional training and continuing professional

development. The term '*skills development*' was employed to describe a range of activities, which might take the form of specific training courses or other mechanisms, but usually referred to a more specialist focus or gap-filling function.

There was limited mention of other approaches to training and skills development sometimes utilised in the sector such as work shadowing, mentoring or action-learning. A number of participants did make reference to the opportunities afforded by online or blended learning. This was also a significant theme of the regional consultations.

#### *Sector*

Whilst the project coordinator had assumed that the term '*sector*' referred to the whole of the community services, non-government, not for profit sector, it became clear that some participants used this term to describe their own part of the sector (such as the disability services sector or alcohol and other drugs sector). This was clarified during discussions and the term *sub-sector* is used to describe the different elements within the broader sector.

#### *Network*

Under Objective 2 the project was asked to consult on the idea of a '*sector-wide training network*'. The project coordinator and most participants took this to mean a *physical network*; the DFC Manager later clarified that this idea could also refer to a *virtual or electronic network*. The suggestion of a physical network in fact proved contentious in a way that a virtual network might not have been, revealing deep-seated reservations about networking and collaboration. For this reason, participants' responses to the idea of a physical network are fully explored in the report, as they clearly highlight structural issues and reflect what a recent Tasmanian Council of Social Service report describes as the 'silo structure' of the sector (TasCOSS, 2009, p.1).

The primary focus of the project was on organisations falling within the DFC's area of responsibility. However the DFC Manager Service Excellence & Sector Development agreed that it was appropriate to consult with some organisations falling outside that remit, for purposes of comparison and learning. Two health-related organisations were therefore included in the consultation process.

## **Project activities**

The project undertook the following activities in pursuing the three objectives between January and June 2010:

1. *Explore the appropriateness of establishing a web-based model that details training opportunities and resources for the sector, including the VCOSS Training and Development Clearinghouse, and provide advice as to whether these have merit or relevance within the South Australian context.*
  - Desk-based research into current web-based resources relevant to the training and skills development needs of the sector
  - Evaluation of the VCOSS Training and Development Clearinghouse and Project, through analysis of the project reports (VCOSS, 2009) and a KPMG Evaluation carried out on behalf of the Victorian Government's Department of Planning and Community Development (KPMG, 2009).
  - Interview with the VCOSS Clearinghouse Project Coordinator and induction into the Clearinghouse website
  - Demonstration of the VCOSS Clearinghouse website at the regional consultation events
  - Soliciting feedback on the value of web-based resources, as part of the group and individual consultations
  - Comparison with the web-based resources offered to the community services sector by the Councils Of Social Service in the other states and territories
  
2. *Liaise with peak bodies and other community organisations in South Australia that are actively engaged in organising and delivering training to establish the foundations for a sector-wide training network. Identify a wider group of organisations that have a general interest in and need for training, with a view to engagement at a later stage.*
  - Three half-day consultation events organised and delivered in metropolitan Adelaide, Mount Gambier and Port Augusta, involving approximately 35 participants in total
  - Ten interviews conducted with a sample of community service sector organisations, representing peak bodies, Registered Training Organisations (RTO), large service providers and smaller community-based organisations
  - Further discussions with other stakeholders
  - Collation of list of organisations contacted through the project
  
3. *Identify opportunities to improve community sector access to DFC training, through active exploration and planning with the new DFC Community Services Training project.*

The delay in appointment of the DFC Training Coordinator position limited progress in relation to this objective. However the project coordinator has undertaken the following:

  - Discussion of this question with participants as part of the consultation process
  - Ongoing liaison with the DFC Manager, Service Excellence & Sector Development
  - Meeting with recently appointed DFC Training Coordinator in late May 2010

## **Project management**

A Project Management Group was set up to oversee the project, in accordance with the Project Implementation Plan criteria. This was composed of Janet Haydon, DFC Manager, Service Excellence & Sector Development; Judith Cross, CEO Relationships Australia; Katrine Hildyard, Branch Secretary, Australian Services Union SA&NT. The group met on three occasions during the project, received reports on progress and advised on overall direction of the project. In addition, the project coordinator and the DFC Manager, Service Excellence & Sector Development have held a number of meetings and maintained regular contact. The project has

received excellent support from the DFC Manager throughout the project and valuable advice and guidance from the members of the Project Management Group.

Additionally the project coordinator has reported back regularly to the Strong Community Healthy State Campaign Group, which has a keen interest in the workforce development implications of sector training and skills development requirements.

### **Context**

While the scope of this project was limited to an investigation of the potential value of web-based resources and sector-wide networking, as means to improving access to opportunities for training and skills development, this should be located within the broader context of workforce development challenges currently facing the non-government, not for profit community services sector.

Lack of access to training and skills development is frequently asserted as a major problem within this sector but it is one that is inadequately explored and evidenced. The 2010 annual ACOSS Community Survey produced the following statistics in relation to this area: just under half of the South Australian respondents highlighted lack of training and development as a hindrance to staff attraction and retention, following in significance after poor salaries (especially when compared with other sectors) and limited career path options (ACOSS, 2010). This seems to be a particular issue for South Australian respondents, although the finding may have been skewed by the statistically low response rate (38 out of 582 national respondents). *Careers at the Coalface* (Carson et al, 2007) remains the only major piece of detailed research specifically on the non-government, not for profit, community services sector in South Australia. Despite having been published in 2007, the conclusions it draws are still substantially valid today in 2010:

*Low rates of pay and limited funding resources were generally agreed to constitute barriers to the application of training strategies on and off the job. Equally important, however, was the assessment that access to suitable training providers, affordability of training and reliable standards of training are all key factors in effective Workforce Development and Planning – and not all of these are under the control of employers. (p.145)*

Some of the key workforce development challenges facing the wider community services and health sector are highlighted in the most recent Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council Environmental Scan (CSHISC, 2010, p.12). These are summarised as:

- *Shift towards service models that emphasise prevention, primary, community and home-based services*
- *Need to build management capacity*
- *Increased complexity of client needs*
- *Increased use of assistant and advanced practitioner roles*
- *Policy focus on integrated models of service delivery*
- *Need to address conditions, recruitment and retention in community services*
- *Labour shortages in rural and remote areas*

All these challenges are applicable in some degree to the non-government community services sector, with some, such as conditions like pay inequity, impacting, by definition, primarily on it. In fact, the significance of the last two of these issues and their implications for sector training and skills development were repeatedly confirmed in the feedback received during the consultation process for this project.

It is accepted as a sine qua non that more effective training and skills development will strengthen the capacity of the community services sector to respond to the increasingly complex social needs in the community. It is also an article of faith that offering good training and skills

development opportunities plays a role in attracting and retaining staff and is therefore seen as a critical component of organisational and sector workforce development strategies. What is also clear is that training and skills development opportunities alone are of limited value, unless they are part of a strategy that addresses the inter-connected, often structural issues, identified above in the CS&HISC Environmental Scan. Workforce development can no longer focus on skills shortages and training alone. Factors such as organisational development, change management, knowledge transfer and improved workplace flexibility are all seen as critical in the effort to attract, recruit, develop and retain staff. Conversely it is the vicious combination of low wages, unsustainable workloads and lack of career development that appear to be the key reasons for 'preventable departures' within the sector. (Carson, 2009).

However, to talk about the sector in these terms - as if it were a homogenous and uniform entity, moving along the same developmental track - would be to ignore the huge differences between the individual organisations that make it up, and the increasing disparity in terms of the resources and capacity that they possess. Whilst some of the largest organisations in the sector are virtually quasi-statutory in their resources, the terms and conditions they can offer, and their attractiveness as employers, there are still many much smaller organisations that are dependent on voluntary management committees, volunteer helpers and that struggle with an insecure future and a hand-to-mouth existence in trying to provide their services. Whilst they may well be dealing with some of society's most complex and intractable problems, many can only afford to employ one or two paid staff members, are able to offer much less competitive terms and conditions of employment, and very little in the way of training and development opportunities to staff or volunteers. *"We're flat out trying to raise money for stamps"* was how one such organisation described their situation. These smaller organisations are caught in the vice of short-term, project funding and are particularly vulnerable to high levels of staff turnover, which in turn renders them less likely to be able to offer training or career development opportunities to inevitably temporary staff.

The inescapable conclusion is that these issues are interconnected and contingent on one another - and that, at their heart, sits the dominant funding model. Where this is based on competitive tendering, that rewards lowest-cost bids and only offers short-term (often twelve months) and insecure contracts, it blights the possibility of planning for training and skills development. The sector will continue to be unable to address systematically its diverse training and skills development needs, within a framework of effective strategies that are consistently articulated at agency, sub-sector and sector-wide levels, unless this funding model is also modified significantly (Ogle & Bowling, 2010).

## **Section 1. Underpinning themes identified by participants**

In order to make sense of and better understand their priorities and concerns, participants were initially asked to identify the three key issues facing their organisation in relation to training and skills development. They were also asked to select issues other than funding, although the latter continually surfaced as a primary concern. Although it was not the purpose of this project to identify or explore these broader issues in depth, they are included here briefly in summary form as significant underpinning themes.

### **Resources are critical**

Despite being asked to select other issues, many participants made the point that the funding model underpinned and constrained training opportunities, both directly and indirectly within their organisation, in a number of critical ways. They referred primarily to the overall adequacy and security of funding which prevented them either from being able to afford training at all or to prioritise it within stretched resources. This impacted directly on organisations seeking training provision and indirectly on those in the sector providing it. The inability to offer attractive salaries to attract and retain suitably qualified staff for training co-ordinator positions was also mentioned by a number of provider organisations in the sector. Resources were also highlighted in relation to adequate human resources (staff and volunteers) to enable smaller organisations to be able to support and take advantage of training opportunities. Finally, resources in relation to equipment and infra-structure (such as ICT) and information (such as workforce profiling data, information on trainers and training provision) were highlighted as critical. The value of an online resource that is easy to access and provides up-to-date Information (such as the VCOSS Clearinghouse) is covered in Section 4.

### **Equity and access**

A number of participants chose to highlight inequities in the current system that disadvantage particular groups, and the relative lack of resources and attention being paid to the regional and rural areas. Regional and rural participants described this as an equity issue that was again related to the predominant funding model. Organisations trying to access training from regional areas in South Australia experience additional costs of time and travel to the metropolitan area that are not recognised by the current funding model. Even if appropriate training is available, regional participants felt that it was often organised in a way that did not take account of the logistical difficulties that they faced. In terms of equity and access, smaller and less well-resourced organisations experience great difficulty in identifying affordable training for their needs, and secondly, in being able to attend because of staffing constraints.

### **Responding to a changing sector**

Some participants identified the changing nature of the sector as a key issue to be taken account of when considering training and skills development functions. These included demographic changes which make the attraction of a younger and more diverse workforce a matter of urgency. Others highlighted the pressure as sector training providers to respond to a more professionalised and competitive marketplace and to effectively identify complex and changing training needs, whilst often lacking the accurate data necessary to do this well. The issue of poor uptake was raised as a key concern in this context, with some organisations describing their frustration at providing training that has been requested, only to find it under-subscribed. It is in this area that ideas for improving training and/or organisational needs analysis and for developing opportunities for shared provision, mentioned in Section 2, could have a positive impact. Online learning is also increasingly being used by parts of the sector as one alternative to the logistical difficulties that individuals and organisations face with the traditional training course format.

### **Innovation and flexibility**

Some participants clearly identified innovation and flexibility in the training and skills development arena, as both a key challenge and an opportunity for future development. Whilst the technological environment is changing rapidly the community services sector is seen as lagging behind the private and the for profit sector, in keeping pace with this. The development of well-supported online learning and flexible approaches to work-based delivery were seen as one response to the seemingly intractable problems of staff release and to the constraints of remoteness and distance, experienced by many organisations in SA. There was a positive interest in exploring and developing online learning approaches. The regional consultation events highlighted this issue strongly as an inevitable development, but were equally concerned at the need for technical infrastructure and capacity to support such developments. Other examples of flexible approaches to learning, such as providing mentoring and learning support for disadvantaged learners were cited as effective, but it was pointed out that such approaches were often not recognised as legitimate 'training' and hence not supported by the necessary flexibility in the funding regimes.

### **Workforce development**

Whilst many of the organisations consulted identified training and skills development as a component of workforce development, the capacity to engage with workforce development and planning is hugely variable across the sector, depending heavily on the size and resources of the organisations involved. Some of the larger employers have significant Human Resources sections and the capacity to locate training and development opportunities within a well-managed and supported performance development system. At the other end of the spectrum, some agencies struggle to find ways of releasing staff to attend training programmes at all, some managers are unskilled in identifying training needs or planning development opportunities for staff, and some governing bodies are still unaware of the value of training either for themselves or for staff and volunteers. In organisations that are essentially staffed by a solo project worker or coordinator, there is a critical need to develop alternative approaches to training and skills development, such as mentoring or on-the-job learning opportunities. This links with the point made above about the need for more flexible funding which recognises the legitimacy of these approaches.

### **Summary**

The 'snapshot' of key 'training and development' issues identified above by organisations reveals a complex set of problems that have deep roots, in other parts of the system some of which can only be addressed through changes to the predominant contract funding mechanism. Ogle and Bowling point up a lack of career development opportunities as a significant factor in retention of staff, and consequently recommend factoring into service agreements, baseline standards and supporting funding for staff training and professional development (Ogle & Bowling, 2010, p.iii). The findings from this project endorse that recommendation.

The significant additional cost of accessing training for regional organisations was raised during this project as an equity issue that requires recognition and attention in government (and other funders) tendering processes, as well as the need for metropolitan training providers to be more sensitive to the constraints facing their regional audiences. Recommendations to this effect are included.

The South Australian Health and Community Services Skills Board is currently leading the development of an Industry Workforce Action Plan (SAHCSSB, 2010), which is in the final draft stages. This offers the sector a strategic mechanism for addressing many of the broader workforce development issues being raised here. The Plan framed around the associated themes of workforce planning, attraction and retention. Whilst proposing an integrated approach for the

whole of the health and community services sector workforce (which is of course much wider than the non-government sector) it includes a number of strategies which address the challenges impacting particularly on the non-government sector. These challenges are currently under discussion in the Strong Community Healthy State Campaign Group and although there are overlaps in the membership of the two bodies, a more systematic communication process is recommended here.

The issue of online learning is one that surfaced several times as a solution to some of the constraints that the sector faces. A recommendation is made here to strengthen the sector's capacity in that regard.

## ***Recommendations***

- Departmental tenders should include baseline minimum standards for (and therefore promote and fund) agreed levels of staff training and professional development.
- Departmental tenders should recognise the additional costs incurred by regional and rural organisations in accessing training (which is frequently only available in metropolitan areas) and a sliding case of costs be developed and factored into funding agreements.
- That the Strong Community Healthy State Campaign Group and the SA Health and Community Services Skills Board set up an appropriate process for discussing and identifying areas of mutual interest in strategies for improving workforce attraction and retention, identified in the emerging H&CS Workforce Industry Action Plan.
- That DFC supports the sector to develop its on-line learning functions and capacity.

## Section 2. A sector-wide training network

### **Objective:**

***Liaise with peak bodies and other community organisations in South Australia that are actively engaged in organising and delivering training, to establish the foundations for a sector-wide training network.***

Responses to the question of a sector-wide network for training, when it was posed initially in this manner, were lukewarm. At the Adelaide consultation event there was a notable lack of response. Polite but limited interest in the possible usefulness of ‘knowing what others are doing’ was expressed, but the lack of response, and even the responses themselves, appeared to conceal rather than reveal meaning. For this reason, the project coordinator reframed the question to a more general one around the potential and limits of networking and collaboration across the whole sector on training and skills-development related issues.

When the question was reframed in this way in the individual discussions, the responses revealed a more nuanced story. They ranged along a spectrum from defensiveness and scepticism to a cautiously optimistic pragmatism, but were weighted in favour of the former.

How can we understand such responses, which clearly reflect not only the experiences, functions and roles of the organisations concerned, but most critically the level of investment that each has in protecting its interests and position? There are a number of inter-connected and mutually reinforcing factors that contribute to this picture.

### **Who is speaking?**

The most guarded or sceptical responses came from the larger service providing organisations, peak bodies and RTOs that occupy a particular position in the sector and have interests to defend.

Some participants questioned the point of networking and collaboration, particularly if this was to be externally imposed:

*What would its purpose be and who for? What would the value to the sector be? Which sector?*

*There is cooperation in (an existing network) which does share information about trainers. But networking happens due to necessity and is based on seizing opportunities. It's not likely to work if it's externally imposed. Also, it happens in non-training contexts.*

and also questioned the degree to which networking and collaboration represent a perceived threat or disbenefit:

*Cooperation can open one to the risk of others stealing your ideas – or starting up the same programs themselves if they are RTOs. There is a lot of knowledge-hoarding in the sector.*

*I'm not sure that (our organisation) would gain a lot from cooperation or sharing. We're already doing it well.*

The Registered Training Organisations based in the community services sector are in a particularly sensitive position re networking and collaboration because they are directly in competition with each other for learners, for funding, for programs. Although there are instrumental networks in place, which serve particular purposes for RTOs, there is a distinction to be drawn between these and broader collaboration:

*We already have networks – for example, the Industry Skills Board, the SA Assessors network, and other accrediting agencies. We use RTOs in other industries for advice on standards etc. There is not much collaboration between RTOs. The ownership of Intellectual Property is one issue – how each RTO develops and assesses qualifications that belong to it.*

*There are no networks of RTOs in the community services sector. They are often transient and the funding cycles don't allow for development.*

Smaller community-based organisations did not respond to suggestions of networking and collaboration with the same degree of wariness. Rather their sights were more focused on day-to-day concerns such as finding basic information or getting small amounts of money to pay for training. They have much more to gain than to lose from what might flow from networks, such as improved access to training-related information, better access to opportunities and the development of collaborative training activities.

### **Marketisation of the sector**

Unsurprisingly, participants' responses revealed the extent of the penetration of market values into the community services sector. Clearly there are well-established arguments in favour of market solutions as a response to training and skills development needs in the sector. These include the value attributed to consumer choice, the maintenance of diversity of providers and provision and the pressure of competition in continuously driving forward quality and innovation. Understandably, organisations with training provision as a core part of their business tended look to market mechanisms to address problems and make the system work.

*The market sorts out good and poor trainers.*

*We are busy enough and there is enough business for all. There's room for everyone. We have made a policy decision to become a boutique RTO, with a niched business.*

*Perhaps we should be arguing for groups to have money given to them in their budgets to be able to purchase training through market choice? Organisations can choose for themselves. But the gap between small and larger organisations is widening. It may be difficult for small and medium – sized organisations to make market choices.*

Diversity of provision – clearly a 'good thing' - here is seen as resulting from encouraging an open market in providers, rather than creating such an outcome from identification of need and a planned response by the sector.

Whilst a reliance on market mechanisms may open up choice to consumers by their purchasing power, it is predicated on the assumption that the organisations concerned have a reasonable degree of purchasing power. Whilst participants from both larger and smaller organisations identified as one of their primary concerns the limitations on funding for training, those which are smaller and less-well resourced.

*When we say there's not enough training for sector, that's incorrect. The real issue is for small & medium-sized organisations to afford enough training for staff... We need to put smaller organisations in a position to purchase.*

*There is no budget line within our service agreement that is earmarked for training. That means we can't prioritise it.*

Nor do all organisations have equitable purchasing power in relation to the training marketplace, which is focused in the metropolitan area and consequently favours its metropolitan customer-base. At one of the regional consultation events a participant aptly summarised the perceived injustice of this situation:

*At a strategic level, the tendering process is not adjusted for rural disadvantage. There needs to be lobbying for locational disadvantage. There is no acknowledgement of the additional costs of training & development provision within tenders. There should be a sliding scale even within the 'rural areas' based on distance and transport costs.*

Another said:

*There needs to be recognition, at managerial levels and higher, of inequities in the rural areas, combined with additional funding.*

A consequence of this penetration of market values and practices means that organisations set clear limits on cooperation. Rather than seeing networking, information sharing or collaboration across the sector as a solution, some participant responses revealed a highly conditional approach:

*There could be some cooperation, and if training organisations are providing identical products there could be room for a more planned curriculum offer. However it's important to look at the different audiences and uptakes, not just at the offering. There's more likely to be a wider uptake if there is a diverse range of providers who adapt and cater for different audiences. The product may have the same title but it could be highly differentiated.*

*There are pockets of cooperation. It ought to be theoretically possible unless organisations are Registered Training Organisations. However brand loyalty comes between organisations. Each one thinks it can push its own unique selling point.*

*Large organisations do make room for smaller organisations and share opportunities and resources. But there's a difference between having and getting a market advantage (and hanging onto this) - and being willing to share resources. A competitive edge comes from having a smart idea that you can keep to yourself for a few years, before others cotton on to it.*

This participant goes on to argue that it is only the values of most community service sector organisations '*not to act detrimentally towards each other through poaching or stealing or undercutting, that limits cut-throat competition*'.

Another participant was less sanguine, believing that the structures that were set up are now too well-entrenched to be undone:

*The structures that have been put in place exacerbate competition. The funding model causes competition. The Department for Families and Communities exacerbated the situation by not allowing access to the College for Learning and Development when it was first set up. There is still resentment in sector. Organisations had to set up as RTOs. and many got Commonwealth funding. They are not going to give it up now. It's too late now to undo the situation, for example MINDA got funding to set up a learning centre for the sector.*

Such a competitive environment spills over into other areas and closes down opportunities for collaboration around services or other developments. This was clearly reflected in relation to the discussions on developing a collective generic curriculum or even more limited shared training opportunities.

## **A silo-ed sector**

Sub-sectors are also distinct in their identity, reinforced by the peak body system. It was noticeable that many of the individual participants automatically referred to their own area as 'the sector'. Whilst cooperation and collaboration may happen within these specific sub-sectors, there are silos or compartments across the community services sector as a whole.

Where there are examples of networking and collaboration, these tend to come from sub-sectors or from partnerships of organisations sharing the same faith or values, where it is easier to find common cause and to recognise the mutual benefits of working together.

*With its very limited resources, the organisation has decided to concentrate on sector development work around training & development. We are developing a Shared Training Opportunities Working Group.*

*We are trying to find a suitable partner to enable our community services courses to be delivered as accredited courses. We are at the early stages of negotiation with another organisation.... We're currently exploring a partnership with (an established faith-based RTO). This would be consistent with our values and philosophy. We have previously had one-off partnerships with TAFE but there have been issues of a disadvantageous cost structure and a larger bureaucracy. A faith-based rationale underpins some (although not all) of our provision. All these factors make it hard to fit our provision into TAFE.*

One participant described her agency's training program as a key mechanism through which it inducted new staff into its ethos and culture, which would make it reluctant to give up or dilute this opportunity, whilst another, in this case a service-providing RTO, used its own programs as a potential recruiting ground for staff for the organisation.

For some organisations, which relate to a specific client group, the sub-sector is much more readily identified with than the whole sector, and some participants raised the legitimate concern that certain things work better at sub-sector level.

*Wouldn't a sector-wide resource duplicate what's already happening at sub-sector level? Sub-sectors would do a better job for themselves.*

What this response does not address is the needs of organisations that may be geographically-focused rather than client-group focused, or those that relate to clients with multiple and complex social needs. Such organisations increasingly need to access information, skills and training that draw on a wide range of disciplinary areas, ranging across a number of sub-sectors. Since the *raison d'être* for a peak body is to support and develop the work of its member organisations within its sub-sector, collaboration at a sector-wide level may be seen as potentially threatening autonomy and ownership.

## **Critical success factors**

Even where there is a willingness to work together with comparable organisations from the same sub-sector, participants suggest that it demands careful safeguards, trust-building and hard work to make it successful. However, there are some positive examples to draw upon:

*The factors inhibiting collaboration are differences within the sector, competitiveness and imbalances of power. Some alliances are easier than others – faith-based or secular. It takes time to build trust but we're getting there.*

*The community services sector is a curious thing – it's both co-operative and competitive. Partnerships are valuable but require maintenance. If a partnership is unevenly weighted, temptations and fears of take-overs are very real. We have experience of being a more junior partner and being left out of the picture. But there are good examples of cooperation. At (location), three or four agencies provide services collaboratively. Emergency Relief training developed a good level of cooperation between preferred providers. It needs careful drawing up of a Memorandum of Understanding, objectives and framework.*

*There is competition and anxiety amongst agencies that recruit (carers) about those people coming together and finding out that different or better terms and conditions are being provided by other agencies. Therefore there is some resistance to joint activities... but we are encouraging dialogue on training needs and issues and possible collaborations. We are currently going for what will work and trust-enhancing activities.*

One participant describes how a process of development work and incentives forged a network:

*The work on co-morbidity created a network of the project officers. Development work was needed to encourage them to pool their individual resources to collectively purchase useful training. We used inducements by contributing some funding. And we included a 'train the trainer' component so there was a long-term benefit.*

Another example of collaboration in action is the Governance Resources Project, led by Volunteering SA&NT and involving a number of other agencies, statutory and non-governmental. The project is developing a shared interactive resource on governance materials and resources. Additionally these agencies have committed themselves to a Charter of Best Practice that entails giving a commitment to pro-actively sharing information and resources on governance.

### **Potential areas of collaboration**

Those who could see potential for collaborative activities in relation to training and skills development responded positively to the idea of a generic curriculum that could span the whole sector:

*There could be a baseline induction program for someone entering the sector. It could have units of competence from the Certificate 4 built into it. Other common areas would be in aspects of front-line management for example, motivational interviewing.*

*Much of the training could be delivered in a shared context. Training needs to emphasise values and principles because that's what attracted people in the first place and that will enable them to make decisions about things that aren't covered by policies and procedures.*

Some of peak bodies felt that there could be 'common ground' on certain elements of training and skills development:

*Training that is increasingly important is continuing Professional Development (CPD) such as the latest techniques or response to a critical policy shift. There is common ground on specific issue training. The government tends to run more clinical service provision with a short-term care focus. The community services sector tends to run more of the long-term support services. We have to differentiate between basic training needs and who should provide this and more specialised targeted training or CPD.*

*Training needs are diverse and not homogenous but there are generic /core components, which could be supplemented by specialist or customised aspects.*

*A more co-ordinated approach would be valuable. Everyone gets protective of his or her own members but it's silly for all of us to be doing the same thing. There's not so much duplication in the rural areas but there is in the metropolitan area. There could be a shared curriculum but it needs time and resources and skills to do it. It could be developed through the Human Services Peaks Forum. We would be interested in something like this and in the idea of joint promotion of each other's training... It would also be great to see all training linked to the national qualifications framework. All peak bodies could be involved in doing that. TAFE would be really interested in seeing that happen.*

A large service provider identified the issue of 'volume' and the extent to which shared training might address this:

*We have an interest in providing training for new managers, but there is an issue of how much need there is in this organisation for that. There's a large commercial market in frontline management training but it's inappropriate. It's not customised to the sector in terms of awareness of funding cycles and insecurity; specific risk management; human resources issues; the nature of the product and outcomes; governance and management etc.*

### **Regional networking and collaboration**

There was considerable interest at the regional consultation meetings in the potential of networking and collaboration. Relationships between government and non-government agencies appeared more relaxed and cooperative than in the metropolitan area. Examples were provided at both events of existing networks, of sharing information, and of informal partnerships across the boundaries. There was a strong appetite for a greater degree of autonomy and capacity to shape their own learning and training agenda, in a pro-active fashion, rather than simply being in the passive position of responding to what was offered by others. (The regular regional training programme offered by CANH was clearly seen an exception to this.) However the critical stumbling-blocks were identified as lack of appropriately qualified trainers, the feasibility of getting sufficient numbers, financial viability and logistical constraints. So whilst there was evident interest in the VCOSS Clearinghouse model as an example of a valuable resource and in the more extensive use of online learning, there was a collective lack of organisational capacity to initiate or sustain the work required to build a more coordinated and pro-active approach. This points to a broader capacity-building and resourcing issue.

### **Summary**

Whilst initial responses to the question of a sector-wide training network were muted, the broader discussion of the potential and limits of networking and collaboration revealed significant reservations about the benefits of collaborating across organisational or sub-sector boundaries. The reasons for this are complex and deep-seated, grounded often in a competitive environment but bolstered by organisational loyalty, faith or cultural identity and sub-sector membership.

Given the nature of this response, it would be ingenuous to suggest that the idea of a D&FC sponsored sector-wide training network would gain much traction across the sector currently, unless there were significant incentives to become involved. However, a network which has clear aims and objectives and which is deployed within a collectively- owned process stands more chance of success. For this reason, the recommendation concerning a sector-wide network is located within the broader recommendation for a strategic approach.

These caveats accepted, there does appear to be some appetite for exploring the feasibility of collaboration on some specific areas in relation to training and skills development. The idea of a basic generic induction to the sector, linked to units of competence from the national qualification has some support, as does the notion of a customised frontline management program for the sector. There is also recognition of the importance of finding ways of funding and supporting CPD

programs, which might transcend some of these boundaries. The suggestion of mapping of all training on offer to the national qualifications framework would potentially have positive benefits for the sector as a whole, in terms of adding value to training offered and supporting the development of career pathways. Again these are suggestions that could be considered within a strategic framework.

## ***Recommendations***

Within the over-arching strategic process recommended, further consideration is given to the value of establishing a sector-wide network as a mechanism for consultation and information-sharing.

## Section 3. Improving access to DFC training

### Objective 3

**Identify opportunities to improve community sector access to DFC training, through active exploration and planning with the new DFC Community Services Training project.**

As referred to in the Introduction, the delay in appointment of the DFC Training Coordinator position limited progress in relation to this objective. However the project coordinator included discussion of this question with participants as part of the consultation process, wherever appropriate.

The question was framed in the context of the proposed rationalisation of the coordination and delivery of the Department's training function, which it is currently exploring. The majority of the participants were unaware of these proposals. Many were also unaware of the scale of the Department's annual financial input of nearly \$3m into training for the community services sector or of the other training-related resources that the Department might hold. There was a degree of confusion and uncertainty amongst certain organisations about the extent and purpose of the DFC funding they themselves received in relation to training.

*I'm not aware of what these (training opportunities) are but we would be interested in accessing them on behalf of our members and would publicise them.*

*I'm not aware of the current extent of DFC input or involvement with our organisation. Our (name of program) might be recipients of training. We have had previous one-off funding and support for a Community Benefit application to co-ordinate and provide (name of program) training across the state as part of a 2-year plan. I would need to check this.*

Even taking account of this lack of information and clarity, which may be fuelling anxieties about the implications of the changes that the Department is proposing, there were significantly polarised responses to this question. Some participants challenged the assumption that improved access to DFC training would be a benefit to the sector. In the context of severely constrained budgets for training purposes, there was a degree of resentment at this disparity. The strong views expressed below were not uncommon:

*Just give us the funding! There is no funding for training – the sector is starved of cash. We chase money through scholarships and traineeships or by trying to match training needs to our organisational strategic priorities such as Closing the Gap.*

*I'm not sure how DFC training would be relevant for the community services sector. Certainly the training provided by the College for Learning and Development... I'm not sure how this would be relevant for community services sector. These are public sector qualifications, not community services sector ones. We have reservations about DFC initiatives. If it wasn't community-based, where would the small organisations go? Community-based RTO's can provide good training, which is very flexible.*

*We have no faith in the DFC to get it right. The community services sector would do a better job. Workers find it hard to prioritise professional development and good professional development programs are expensive. Why not give the funding to the agencies? The Department can ring-fence the funding and demand evaluation of training impact, rather than empire building. Let it be demand-led training rather than provider-led.*

A small number of key providers expressed their frank concerns that the Department's College for Learning and Development might use this opportunity to try to enter the marketplace for

community services sector training. Whilst there is continuing resentment and regret in some quarters that the College was not set up originally to include the non-government community services sector, this is now viewed as irreversible, with the development of sector-based RTOs, as one consequence. This is a sensitive area that highlights potential conflicts of interest between the role of the Department and the sector it supports.

However alternative perspectives were also offered on this question. Other participants took the view that access by the non-governmental sector to relevant government-run training and related resources should be mainstreamed. This was clearly expressed by the organisations from the health sector, which described a sense of marginalisation by their particular government departments.

*One of the key issues for us is the limited access to training opportunities from government. The problem with government training is that it is often pitched at own staff and community services sector is just an afterthought. It should open up training opportunities to the sector. It would help with efficiencies if you can piggyback ... we could negotiate more efficient and effective packages that could be relevant across the sector. It would need joint management and equal say in the negotiation of that, of course, but a more porous interface between government and sector could only improve knowledge and mutual understanding.*

*The Department of Health does run professional networks with in-service development opportunities but our involvement is tokenistic and the approach they take is often very clinical.*

One organisation that works closely with a number of government departments argued in favour of a mutual openness and recognition of each other's contribution by both sectors:

*The DFC should open up its training to the sector – and think about issues of accessibility and making training available in the rural areas. Anything that's being offered in DFC should be offered to the sector. Many organisations have been through the first level of the Service Excellence training and benefited from the programmes offered through the Learning and Development Unit. But why wouldn't DFC staff go to community service sector training programmes? There's still the notion in the DFC's mind that somehow community sector training is less valuable and poorer quality. Learning from each other could only benefit the sector as a whole.*

## **Summary**

If these views are taken as reasonably reflective of a cross-section of opinion across the sector, the question of how to improve access to DFC training opportunities and resources is not as straightforward as it might seem. There is a lack of information or understanding about how the Department currently operates and what training-related resources are available and to whom. There is anxiety about future changes and the implications for potential loss of autonomy or income to training provider organisations in the sector. There is concern about the role that the College for Learning and Development will play in any new configuration and whether it will encroach on what is seen as sector territory. There are certainly differing and opposing perspectives on the degree of collaboration and mutuality that is seen as possible or desirable between the government and the non-government sectors.

These two areas are therefore included within the key recommendation to the Department as matters that require attention, before significant progress can be made.

## ***Recommendations***

Clarify the purpose of the Department's internal review of its training remit and review progress on that to date

Clarify the role and appropriate scope of the Department's College for Learning and Development, in relation to providing training for the non-government community services sector

## **Section 4. Investigation of web-based resources**

***Explore the appropriateness of establishing a web-based model that details training opportunities and resources for the sector, including the VCOSS Training and Development Clearinghouse, and provide advice as to whether these have merit or relevance within the South Australian context.***

The term ‘web-based resources’ is used here to refer to an online facility or portal that provides information on training opportunities. The project was not tasked with investigating online resources for learning purposes, although this is clearly an area that requires further support and development.

### ***4.1 Existing web-based resources supporting access to training and skills development***

A number of existing websites provide information on workforce development topics, including training and skills development. These are found at international, national, and state, sector and sub-sector level. The project has investigated a number of these sites and reviewed them. A table of those that were reviewed is attached at Appendix 2. However, one caveat is that it is almost impossible to know whether all relevant sites have been identified.

The sites below that include the Councils of Social Service are described in slightly greater detail than those in Appendix 2, to afford a comparison with the VCOSS Clearinghouse model.

[www.managementsupportonline.com.au](http://www.managementsupportonline.com.au)

Management Support Online is a subscriber fee-paying web-based service for NGOs and community based organisations resourcing staff and members of boards and management committees in all aspects of governance, management and operations. It includes templates and tools to download and use, animated training programs with voice over, good practice guides, links to sites and contacts, and a confidential advice service.

[www.ourcommunity.com](http://www.ourcommunity.com)

Our Community is a free online comprehensive resource bank for community sector organisations on all aspects of governance and community organising. It also offers online information about training courses across Australia, provided by its training arm, the Australian Institute of Community Practice and Governance.

[www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au)

The Australian Council of Social Service lists a selection of training courses relevant to the community services sector currently offered in the major cities across Australia.

[www.actcoss.org.au](http://www.actcoss.org.au)

The ACT Council of Social Service has an online Organisational Information Kit. The OIK is designed to give community organisations in the ACT, information about governing and managing community organisations in an increasingly complex regulatory environment. It contains a number of factsheets, sample policies and procedures and links to external web resources to assist organisations understand the requirements placed upon them and to improve their sustainability. ACTCOSS receives funding from the ACT Government which helps keep the information up to date and relevant. The Executive Director adds: “We see the OIK as very much an introduction, first port of call and hence the links to other more detailed information sources. We provide information on our sector training (governance and standards, as well as other topics)

on the website, but not calendars developed by others. This partially arises from how our website is coded. While we see the web as an important portal for basic information we encourage organisations to call us with more detailed questions and requests for information, so we can help guide them to the best solution for their needs” (Dundas, 2010).

[www.ncoss.org.au](http://www.ncoss.org.au)

The New South Wales Council of Social Service has a Management Support Unit (MSU) that is part of the NCOSS Sector Development Unit. This unit supports and resources the development of the community sector through a range of industry development projects and initiatives. It provides a broad range of services to enhance the organisational capacity of the non-government sector in areas such as human resources, good governance and efficient ‘back office’ operations. It also hosts a Consultant Directory that lists consultants in management and governance for NGO, not-for-profit organisations.

[www.ntcoss.org.au](http://www.ntcoss.org.au)

The Northern Territory Council of Social Service has no online resources specifically for training and skills development. Sector development support is offered through the provision of industry support and advice to the social and community Sector, including training and advice on community management issues and on running an organisation, e.g. administration, staff management, finance and funding issues. It also includes undertaking specific sector development and capacity building projects. In 2009 NTCOSS produced a Community Sector Workforce Toolkit which can be downloaded from the website or as CD and paper versions.

[www.qcoss.org.au](http://www.qcoss.org.au)

*The Queensland Council of Social Service has an online Consultant/Service Provider Register. It has a Sector Development service which includes access to online resources to support organisational development, in areas such as governance.*

[www.sacoss.org.au](http://www.sacoss.org.au)

The South Australian Council of Social Service offers online information about its own training programme and its customised training, consultancy and organisational support service.

[www.vcoss.org.au](http://www.vcoss.org.au)

The Victorian Council of Social Service hosts the VCOSS Clearinghouse on its website, described in detail below.

[www.wacoss.org.au](http://www.wacoss.org.au)

The West Australian Council of Social Service offers online information about its own training and consulting programs that are designed to build and strengthen the capacity of the community sector through its Organisation Development Services. This includes customised training, professional development programs and consultancy services.

[www.tascoss.org.au](http://www.tascoss.org.au)

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service hosted an Industry Development Unit, funded by the Department of Health and Human Services from 2006 to June 2010. The purpose of the Unit is “to support community service organisations (CSOs) to strengthen their capacity to deliver quality services to achieve better outcomes for disadvantaged Tasmanians” (Evolving Ways, n.d., p. iii). The Unit offers an online Consultants and Trainers Register and a Resources and Links facility. It also ran a number of projects including a Workforce Development Project that explored current issues relating to the recruitment and retention of staff in the community services sector. This project reported on its work last year (TasCOSS, 2009).

## 4.2 VCOSS Training and Development Clearinghouse

The Victorian Council of Social Service Training and Development Clearinghouse is part of the VCOSS Statewide Training and Development Program, set up in 2007. This grew from preliminary work undertaken by VCOSS in 2005, which included a sector-wide Training Needs Analysis (VCOSS, 2005). This identified the need for improved access to information and a more coordinated response to sector training and skills development needs. VCOSS obtained funding of \$313,600 through the Victorian Government's Community Support Fund for the Statewide Training and Development Program, including the Clearinghouse that offered web-based resources and hands-on support. For brevity and accuracy, the information below is taken directly from the VCOSS website.



### About the Clearinghouse

Community organisations often need to access a range of websites and/or spend a good deal of time searching for information on what training and resources are available and appropriate to them. The VCOSS Training and Development Clearinghouse is a centralised, user-friendly and community sector-specific service designed to take the legwork out of this. The Clearinghouse includes:

- A quality assured database of trainers recommended by community sector organisations for capacity building assistance
- Information and support for community organisations wanting to engage a skilled volunteer through pro bono brokers
- Access to free and subsidised capacity building training
- A range of support programs for community sector leadership, including professional mentoring
- A calendar of free training, conferences, seminars and events
- A list of resources and quick guides for finding skilled volunteers, IT assistance, funding, second-hand office furniture, etc.
- A free monthly e-newsletter PIECES containing the latest information on training and development opportunities and resources for community organisations

All information provided on this website is backed up by friendly Clearinghouse staff who are available to provide information and referral over the phone and/or face-to-face. For further information regarding the above or to subscribe to the PIECES e-newsletter, [contact us](#).

The VCOSS project produced a final report spanning the period July 2007 to June 2009. This report states:

*The Statewide Training and Development Program through the VCOSS Training and Development Clearinghouse delivered strongly against all milestones. To date, through partnerships with business, pro bono and philanthropic organisations, the project has delivered more than 200 training and development opportunities worth \$280,874 to more than 1200 people and brokered nearly one million dollars worth of skilled volunteer placements to the community sector.*

*Almost 300 organisations have used the hands-on referral service that supports the information on the website.*

*The monthly e-newsletter PIECES is distributed to over 2000 recipients across Victoria.*

*The Clearinghouse delivered more than a four hundred percent return on investment. The investment of \$313,600 from DPCD Community Support Fund resulted in a total project income of \$1,681,382.*

*The project brokered \$1,250,803 in in-kind contributions. This is more than five times the expected amount of \$239,800. (VCOSS, 2009, p. 1)*

The report goes on to conclude that the Clearinghouse has shown itself to be a cost-effective way for the government to invest in strengthening the capacity of the Victorian community sector. The Victorian Government's Department of Planning and Community Development commissioned an independent evaluation by KPMG. The key evaluation findings are reproduced below:

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the VCOSS Clearinghouse performs a niche role, notably in the tailored brokerage of training opportunities for the community sector and particularly smaller CSOs. Another key feature distinguishing the VCOSS Clearinghouse from similar services is the localised service it provides in fostering tangible partnerships between organisations and addressing local needs and gaps. The Clearinghouse achieved, and in some cases exceeded, its objectives as outlined in its second VCSG project application. For example, VCOSS reported that the Clearinghouse had successfully facilitated engagement of CSOs with the private sector. Over two years, 272 skilled volunteers (against an original objective of 40 per year) had been matched with CSOs, totalling just under \$1 million in value to the community sector.

In 2007/08 there were 56,613 Clearinghouse website page requests and 5,333 downloads. Website activity increased significantly in 2008/09 to 173,627 page requests and 9,981 downloads, an increase of 207 per cent and 87 per cent respectively on 2007/08 usage data. The non-government stakeholders consulted generally supported an interpretation of the activity data as being indicative of the effectiveness of the Clearinghouse.

While the activity data collected by VCOSS shows encouraging positive trends in output, it should also be noted that the data collected and evaluation undertaken by VCOSS was limited in scope to acquitting its performance with respect to the requirements of the VCSG. In addition, the Clearinghouse has been in operation for a relatively short time period and so caution should be exercised in drawing broader conclusions on its impacts on the community sector at this stage.

A number of opportunities were identified in which the Clearinghouse could improve its service to the community sector. These opportunities primarily centred on the degree of awareness of Clearinghouse activities across the broader NFP sector. It should be noted that no explicit funds were provided under the VCSG for the Clearinghouse to undertake extensive advertising. However, given the prominence of this issue during stakeholder consultation, there is a need for any future funding options to consider the requirement for investment in this area. (KPMG, 2009, p.5).

The VCOSS Project has subsequently obtained funding of \$150,000 per annum for a further two years, from two Victorian Government Departments and a charitable foundation, the Helen McPherson Trust.

### **4.3 More information on the Clearinghouse**

The project coordinator visited the VCOSS Clearinghouse Project and interviewed its Project Coordinator. The relevant points of this discussion are recorded below:

#### **Much more than a website**

A full-time Coordinator and a part-time Administrator support the VCOSS Clearinghouse Project. The Clearinghouse itself is embedded within the VCOSS Statewide Training and Development Program, which in turn forms part of VCOSS' sector capacity-building & development functions. There is synergy with VCOSS' broader work on policy development and organisational capacity building. For example, the Clearinghouse supports training needs identified in VCOSS other development projects and the broader VCOSS Team itself makes use of the Clearinghouse resources for training purposes. Most significantly, the Clearinghouse is staffed so that it can provide a point of contact, offer additional information and guidance and actively help community sector organisations and individuals to access what they need. It also provides a regular training and development focused Ebulletin, PIECES. This support has been critical in encouraging organisations and individuals to make use of the site and has acted as catalyst and driver of a number of development initiatives. The Project Coordinator believes that the support and guidance provided by the staff have been critical to its success. In short, the Clearinghouse is far more than a website.

#### **Ownership by the sector**

From its inception, VCOSS argued strongly that the Clearinghouse should be located outside government, although not necessarily housed by VCOSS itself. This is based on the view that the Clearinghouse and wider project will be more effectively delivered and utilised as sector-owned and managed resources. Given the wider developmental role that the Training and Development Project plays in capacity building and sector development, this ownership is central to the identity of the Project.

#### **Learning points about the website**

- Get independent & impartial advice from a recommended designer who understands the culture of the sector. Pro Bono, if possible.
- Keep the site simple and add to it gradually.
- PIECES, the e-newsletter, is one of great success stories of the project.
- The web page has a Wish List where visitors can submit training requests, additional needs, request support etc. Versions of this are distributed at VCOSS events to develop a continuous source of information on needs in sector. VCOSS then brokers training programmes to fill gaps and meet unmet needs. This idea could be adopted more widely in the sector.
- Responsibility for updating lies with the external trainers and training providers themselves. Simple processes facilitate this. The Clearinghouse staff check and then action materials live to the website.
- VCOSS does not endorse or recommend the trainers/consultants. Quality assurance rests with trainers/consultants themselves who supply references from two community services sector organisations that will vouch for their quality. There is a VCOSS disclaimer against the trainers' database.
- Maintenance is critical and often falls off the list of priorities. Information is quickly out of date but the value of having that information gathered in one place is one of the key benefits of the site. VCOSS is seeking to increase the administrative staff element of the project.

- Record everything to demonstrate project impact, (even when you don't have time to do so). The under-recording of usage was noted in the KPMG evaluation

### **Supporting smaller organisations**

The Clearinghouse's primary customers are smaller organisations who cannot afford expensive training. As one of its activities, the Clearinghouse supports and brokers, with a range of partners, free or low-cost training, prioritising its resources for the 'lower end' of the market. This has resulted in a Regional Training Calendar, an Advocacy Training Program, a series of workshops and forums, and an OHS Education Project

### **Sector wide or sub-sector specific**

The Clearinghouse has helped all the sub-sectors by promoting their training and helping them to fill places on courses. The sub-sectors continue to promote their own activity. Where peaks are not funded to provide training, they are happy to refer on. Big organisations often offer pro bono or reduced fee places to smaller ones.

### **Successes of the project**

Skilled Volunteers Project — a collaborative network has been developed to match up pro bono and skilled volunteer help with community sector organisations. This has promoted collaboration between the partner organisations, generated leverage of just under \$1million and actively benefited community sector organisations.

Philanthropy sessions — the Clearinghouse Project Coordinator has brokered relationships between philanthropic bodies and the community services sector through sessions held in communities, especially with indigenous and regional groups. This has encouraged more applications from these groups. If organisations clearly need coaching to improve their applications, the philanthropic bodies now refer them back for support via the Clearinghouse Project. The aim is to develop this into a separate fully funded programme.

Publications — in 2007 VCOSS produced new editions of *Community Management and Policies and Procedures*, two manuals from its set of Manuals for Community Organisations, first published in 1991. These are small, affordable and in plain English. Manuals contain information & guidance, templates and checklists, with links to online references from originating organisations. They are currently revising the other manuals in the set.

### **Future funding & sustainability**

The Clearinghouse has received two years further funding from the Victorian Government's Department of Community Development & Department of Human Services, each contributing 25% with the Helen McPherson Foundation contributing 50%. The relationship with the Helen McPherson Trust was built during the development work with philanthropic bodies and the Project Coordinator is firmly convinced that it was because of this relationship that Trust has agreed to co-fund.

The funding of \$150,000 per annum is for salaries and on costs, not programmes. VCOSS is expected to continue developing partnerships, attracting matching funding and exploring income-generating activities. The KPMG Report explored the model of fee-for-service as one option for future sustainability. However, a user profile that is predominantly based on smaller and less-well resourced organisations raises questions about the viability of effectively implementing such a model.

### **Participants' views**

During the consultation process for this paper, participants at the regional events had the opportunity to try out the VCOSS Clearinghouse. The idea of a sector specific web-based resource was also discussed with all the individual interviewees, who were subsequently asked to

try out the website individually. Feedback was sought on its relevance and applicability to a South Australian context. In general, there was an extremely positive response to the VCOSS model, particularly from the participants at the regional consultation events, from smaller less-well resourced organisations and from sub-sectors that do not have this kind of resource already in place. The tabs for identifying regional location, topics and cost were seen as particularly helpful.

Some of the comments illustrate these points:

*Yes, it does look like a useful service and it's akin to what we've endeavoured to do (without additional funding for it). I don't know that it would impact significantly on the training and development opportunities for us personally but, particularly if it were possible to sort by issues or sector, it could be useful for our sector.*

*I thought it was a very useful site. In fact I downloaded a few items and will go back to explore some more. We are about to employ a Volunteer Development Facilitator and I know it would be very useful to them. It is pitched at the right level for many of the areas for our organisation. I will share this site with all of my Volunteer Managers.*

*I believe it would be a useful resource if widely used which would reduce time spent searching for relevant training and resources. It would certainly enhance our capacity to inform and link our members in to opportunities available. How long has it been operational and has it been a useful resource in Victoria?*

*Yes and yes! It is just what we need as a small organisation.*

*Yes we are looking at developing our own web-site with this kind of information. We would simply link into a sector-wide network additionally.*

Reservations that were expressed revolved around possible duplication of effort, lack of familiarity with web-based facilities and the critical importance of adequately resourcing the maintenance requirements.

The major challenge was identified as *'Keep it up to date, resource it properly.'*

Suggestions for additional information:

- Registered Training Organisations – what they do, how to find out about them and evaluate their suitability for partnerships
- Funding support that was linked to the courses or programs being advertised
- Links to accredited training
- How courses or programs aligned to national qualifications framework
- Links to career pathways

The most popular features were:

- simplicity
- information on one site
- Information on trainers, described as very difficult to get especially in the rural areas
- The interactive Wish List identifying common training needs. It was seen as important to ensure that organisations were kept informed if training is developed in relation to this need.
- identifier tabs to search for specific features such as regional area, cost, topic

### **Related sector initiatives**

Although there are a number of individual organisational web-sites and other web-sites providing information about training which is relevant to the community services non-government sector,

there is currently no other comparable resource in South Australia, which combines sector-specific training information and resources, with advice, guidance and capacity-building support. Some current sector initiatives which could link with such an initiative are the Governance Resources Project led by Volunteering SA which is in the process of developing an online directory of governance resources for the not for profit sector; work developed by National Disability Services on a regional calendar of training opportunities in SA for the disability sector; the Community and Neighbourhood Houses Association calendar of regional events; the National Centre Education & Training on Addiction website for the Alcohol and Other Drugs sub-sector; Child and Family Welfare Association's proposal to develop a sub-sector website.

## ***Summary***

The VCOSS Clearinghouse model provides an excellent example of a valuable web-based resource for the community services sector, which has now been operating successfully for three years. VCOSS has focused its resources on the smaller, less well-resourced community-based smaller organisations by its promotion and support of free and low-cost training opportunities and through developmental work undertaken on organisational support and capacity-building. This work has generated successful partnerships with sector peak bodies and has secured further funding for the project. The response from participants in South Australia was favourable across the range of organisations consulted, but was particularly enthusiastic from smaller organisations, those whose role is to support such organisations and from those based in the rural and regional areas of the State. It was strongly felt that such a resource must be located in the context of sector capacity-building.

For this reason, the recommendation to the Department is to support the establishment of a similar resource as part of the strategic development.

## ***Recommendations***

In tandem with, and as an integral component of, the longer-term strategic approach described above, it is recommended that action is taken on the following initiatives:

- 3.1 The Department supports the sector to establish a sector-wide web-based resource that is based on the VCOSS Clearinghouse model which is adequately resourced by administrative and coordination positions and located within the sector.



## **Appendices**

<b><i>Appendix 1</i></b>	<b><i>Table of websites reviewed</i></b>
<b><i>Appendix 2</i></b>	<b><i>Invitation to Adelaide Consultation event 16 February 2010</i></b>
<b><i>Appendix 3</i></b>	<b><i>Attendees at Adelaide event, 16 February 2010</i></b>
<b><i>Appendix 4</i></b>	<b><i>Promotional flyer for regional consultation events</i></b>
<b><i>Appendix 5</i></b>	<b><i>Attendees at Mount Gambier event, 23 April 2010</i></b>
<b><i>Appendix 6</i></b>	<b><i>Attendees at Port Augusta event, 29 April 2010</i></b>
<b><i>Appendix 7</i></b>	<b><i>Notes from regional consultation events</i></b>
<b><i>Appendix 8</i></b>	<b><i>List of organisations consulted</i></b>

## Appendix 1: Websites reviewed

Site title	Hosted by	Purpose	Comment
Community Services Workforce Village 2008 (CSWV)	SA Government assumed management of site October 2008.		June 2009 merged within the Industry Skills Council Community Active Careers website.
Community Active Careers June 2009	Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (CSHISC)	'One-stop' portal industry career information for large national audience	Despite increased functionality & additional traffic, Community Active Careers was deactivated 31 December 2009. See next entry.
Careers that Matter <a href="http://www.careersthatmatter.com.au">www.careersthatmatter.com.au</a> Launched March 2010	CSHISC the recognised national body on the skills & workforce development requirements of the community services & health industries	Supporting community services sector by expanding career & workforce information Content expanded to include prospective employees all ages and overseas migrants. Links to Australian Government, TAFE, employers etc. Career mapping tool.	Comprehensive information but not sector-specific. Focus on accredited training provision.
<a href="http://www.cshisc.com.au">www.cshisc.com.au</a>	CSHISC –	Accredited training National focus Newsletter	
SACommunity (formerly infosearch) <a href="http://sacommunity.org.au">http://sacommunity.org.au</a>	Connecting Up Australia	SA Community Information resource to help people connect with & get involved in their community. Find out about help available through government, non-government and community services through out SA. Organisations Services	
<a href="http://www.sa.gov.au">www.sa.gov.au</a>	SA Government	Portal to all services – divided into Government, Business and Community. Lists Education and Training but not sector specific. Covers wide range of provision and providers.	Have to do a lot of trawling and sifting to identify sector related information.
<a href="http://www.nceta.flinders.edu.au">www.nceta.flinders.edu.au</a>	National Centre for Education & Training on Addiction The National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) is an internationally recognised research centre that works as a catalyst for change in the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) field. The promotion of Workforce Development (WFD) principles, research and evaluation of effective practices is NCETA's core business.		

## **Appendix 2: Invitation to Adelaide Consultation event 16 February 2010**

25 January 2010

Dear Colleague

You are warmly invited to attend a consultation meeting on

### **'Approaches to training and skills development for the community services sector'**

**On Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

**From 10.00 am till 12.30 pm**

**At The Marjorie Black Community Room, SACOSS  
47 King William Road  
Unley, SA 5051**

The Strong Community Healthy State Campaign Group has been successful in obtaining DFC funding support to explore and make recommendations on three specific areas that relate to the lack of access by the community services sector to training and skills development opportunities. This work is being carried out by SACOSS from January to June 2010 and will result in a report with recommendations to DFC on three issues:

1. The advantages and limitations of web-based models (such as the VCOSS Clearing house) in facilitating sector access to training and development
2. The relevance and viability of a sector-wide network for community sector organisations engaged in coordinating and /or delivering training
3. The identification of opportunities to improve community sector access to DFC training opportunities/resources

The consultation will focus particularly on points 2 and 3, although any contributions on point 1 will be welcomed.

In order to build a more comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the nature and level of training and skills development activity in the sector, I would be most grateful if you could complete the attached survey in as much detail as possible and return it to me at SACOSS by Monday February 8<sup>th</sup> . 2010.

The weight and relevance of the project recommendations will rely heavily on your engagement and expertise and I very much hope that you'll be able attend (or to send a representative) to ensure that your organisation's perspective is reflected. Please register your interest in attending by emailing me [mavis@sacoss.org.au](mailto:mavis@sacoss.org.au). by Monday February 8<sup>th</sup>.

If you are not able to attend but would like to contribute your views, or have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me individually.

Yours sincerely

Mavis Zutshi  
SACOSS Development and Training Manager

### Appendix 3 Attendees at Adelaide consultation event

Name	Title	Organisation	Contact
Ann-Marie Hudson	Training Manager	Aged Community Services SA&NT	<a href="mailto:research@agedcommunity.asn.au">research@agedcommunity.asn.au</a>
Chanelle Donaldson		National Disability Services	<a href="mailto:chanelle.donaldson@nds.org.au">chanelle.donaldson@nds.org.au</a>
Noelene Wadham	State Manager	National Disability Services	<a href="mailto:noelene.wadham@nds.org.au">noelene.wadham@nds.org.au</a>
Sharon Wachtel	Community Engagement Facilitator	St.Vincent De Paul	<a href="mailto:swachtel@svdpsa.org.au">swachtel@svdpsa.org.au</a>
Jo Larkin		Volunteering SA & NT	

# Improving access

to training and skills development in the  
community services sector

**Your views are wanted, Country SA!**  
**Regional consultation forums, April 2010**

Accessing the right type and level of training and skills development for staff and volunteers can play a crucial role in a workforce recruitment and retention strategy.



The evidence tells us that this is an issue of concern for community service sector organisations, particularly those in rural and remote South Australia.

Even if you can find accurate information and make an informed choice about the training on offer, there are still many practical questions and further issues for the individual employee, the employer and the sector as a whole. Is the training affordable? Does it provide good value? Will it help an individual's employment or career prospects? Can the employer afford to support the employee and provide cover for their work? How will training help mobility and career development across the community services sector?

The South Australian Council of Social Service, funded by the Department for Families & Communities and working on behalf of the Strong Community Healthy State Campaign, is currently consulting community service sector organisations on these issues. We want to hear your views on how access to training and skills development opportunities might be improved, how resources could be better used and how the Department for Families & Communities could develop a co-ordinated and strategic approach to the training it offers to the sector.

The forums will provide an opportunity to

- hear an update on training and skills development news in the sector
- express your views and ideas on this important topic
- help shape policy recommendations to the SA Government
- network and share ideas with colleagues

You are warmly invited to attend one of the regional forums

## **Mount Gambier**

Friday 23 April, 10am - 1pm — followed by networking lunch  
ac care office, White Avenue, Mount Gambier

## **Port Augusta**

Thursday 29 April, 10am - 1pm — followed by networking lunch  
UCW Building, 3 Chapel Street, Port Augusta

Please register no later than **Monday 12 April**  
**Download the booking form from [www.sacoss.org.au/events](http://www.sacoss.org.au/events)**  
Return completed bookings to  
Mavis Zutshi, Manager Development & Training at SACOSS  
E. [mavis@sacoss.org.au](mailto:mavis@sacoss.org.au) F. 8272 9500 P. 08 8305 4224



**Appendix 5: Attendees at Mount Gambier event 23 April 2010**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title &amp; Organisation</b>	<b>Email Contact details</b>	<b>Attended</b>
1	Allison Thomson	Coordinator, UCWPA	athomson@ucwpa.org.au	Yes
2	David Burt	Apprenticeship Broker, DECS	david.burt@sa.gov.au	Yes
3	David Hill	Project Officer Employment & Training Programs, Regional Development Australia – Limestone Coast	david@lcrdb.com	Yes
4	Ingrid Coombe	Team Leader, Mental Illness Fellowship SA (MIFSA)	ingrid@mifsa.org	Yes
5	Katie Fisher	Support Worker, Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide (UCWPA)		Yes
6	Maureen Scanlon	Program Coordinator, MIFSA	maureen@mifsa.org	Yes
7	Penny Richardson	Coordinator , UCWPA	prichardson@ucwpa.org.au	Yes
8	Peter Fox	Manager, Independent Learning Centre	peter.fox@millicenhs.sa.edu.au	Yes
9	Tony Ross	HR Manager, ac.care	tony@accare.org.au	Yes
10	Ute Herrmann-Bullock	Director, Organisational Development, ac.care	ute@accare.org.au	Yes
11	Lyn Masters	HR Officer, ac.care	lyn@accareorg.au	Yes Yes

**Appendix 6: Attendees at Port Augusta event 29 April 2010**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title &amp; Organisation</b>	<b>Email address</b>
1	Aaron Ward	Project Officer, Flexible Learning, ICAN (DECS)	<a href="mailto:aaron.ward@sa.gov.au">aaron.ward@sa.gov.au</a>
2	Angela Sunman	Apprenticeship & Traineeship consultant, Career Employment Group	<a href="mailto:angela.sunman@ceg.net.au">angela.sunman@ceg.net.au</a>
3	Anne O'Reilly	Director, Community Services, Port Augusta City Council	
25	Belinda Kemp	Case Manager, Baptist Care	<a href="mailto:bkemp@baptistcaresa.org.au">bkemp@baptistcaresa.org.au</a>
4 Apol	Cathy Olsen	Senior Education & Employment Officer, Community Bridging Services	<a href="mailto:Cathy.olsen@cbsinc.org.au">Cathy.olsen@cbsinc.org.au</a>
5	Charlie Agett	Apprenticeship & Traineeship consultant, Career Employment Group	<a href="mailto:charlie.aggott@ceg.net.au">charlie.aggott@ceg.net.au</a>
6	Deb Kirkham	RN/Nurse Tutor, Pika Wiya learning Centre	
7	Ellie Medlin	Training Consultant, Heat Inc.	<a href="mailto:emedlin@heta.com.au">emedlin@heta.com.au</a>
8 Apol	Helen Altmann	Senior Education & Employment Officer, Community Bridging Services	<a href="mailto:Helen.altmann@cbsinc.org.au">Helen.altmann@cbsinc.org.au</a>
9 Apol	Ian Brown	Employment Project Officer, DEWR	<a href="mailto:ian.brown@deewr.gov.au">ian.brown@deewr.gov.au</a>
10 Apol	Jacqueline Kranz	Local Program Manager, ICAN (DECS)	<a href="mailto:Jacqueline.kranz@sa.gov.au">Jacqueline.kranz@sa.gov.au</a>
11	Jenni Aird	Interviewer, The Salvation Army	
12	Jo-Anne Newell	Manager, Ranges Youth centre Inc.	<a href="mailto:Rangesyc@internode.on.net">Rangesyc@internode.on.net</a>
13	Karen Skinner	Project Manager, Whyalla Economic Development Council	<a href="mailto:Karen@wedb.com.au">Karen@wedb.com.au</a>
14	Kelly Glenton	Financial Counsellor, UCWPP	<a href="mailto:Kelly.Glenton@ucwpp.org.au">Kelly.Glenton@ucwpp.org.au</a>

15	Kevin Rogan	Apprenticeship & Traineeship consultant, Career Employment Group	<a href="mailto:kevin.rogan@ceg.net.au">kevin.rogan@ceg.net.au</a>
24	Lillian Shaw	Coordinator, Day to day Living, UCWPA	<a href="mailto:lshaw@ucwpa.org.au">lshaw@ucwpa.org.au</a>
16	Liz Loizeau	Coordinator, Community Bridging Services	<a href="mailto:Liz.loizeau@cbsinc.org.au">Liz.loizeau@cbsinc.org.au</a>
17 Apols	<i>Louise Bearman</i>	<i>Executive Manager Participation, Training and Employment ,UCWPP</i>	<a href="mailto:Louise.bearman@ucwpp.org.au">Louise.bearman@ucwpp.org.au</a>
26	Marie Kuchel	UCWPA, Whyalla	
18	Michelle Keane	Manager, Participation & Training projects , UCW Port Pirie	<a href="mailto:michelle.keane@ucwpp.org.au">michelle.keane@ucwpp.org.au</a>
19	Paul Templer	Apprenticeship & Traineeship consultant, Career Employment Group	<a href="mailto:paul.templer@ceg.net.au">paul.templer@ceg.net.au</a>
20	Robert Cugley	Manager, The Salvation Army	<a href="mailto:robert.cugley@aus.salvationarmy.org">robert.cugley@aus.salvationarmy.org</a>
21 Apols	<i>Shirley Gabb</i>	<i>Manager Community Support Services, The Salvation Army</i>	<a href="mailto:shirley.gabb@aus.salvationarmy.org">shirley.gabb@aus.salvationarmy.org</a>
22	Teresa Court	Training Consultant, Heta Inc.	<a href="mailto:tcourt@heta.com.au">tcourt@heta.com.au</a>
23	Toby Fogarty	Project Officer, Flexible Learning, ICAN (DECS)	<a href="mailto:toby.fogarty@sa.gov.au">toby.fogarty@sa.gov.au</a>
24	Helen Edmondson	Child & Family Health ,Whyalla	
25	Bridget Johns	Flexible Learning, ICAN (DECS)	<a href="mailto:bridget.johns@sa.gov.au">bridget.johns@sa.gov.au</a>

## Appendix 7: Notes from Mount Gambier and Port Augusta regional events – combined

### Activity 1. Identifying and ranking the issues in importance

Costs and available funding - the fees & unacknowledged costs of accessing training from rural/regional/remote areas. For small or poorly funded organizations, cost is prohibitive. This makes choice of best value & good quality training very important as budget is so small. One organisation was checked by Department officers because of the amount she had spent on staff training.	11
Distance / accessibility	3
Metro vs. regional areas – there is a sense of imbalance and inequity. This relates back to the funding model used. It is also due to lack of awareness on the part of metropolitan organisers who do not seem to take account of rural needs when organising events. They can be too long / too short/ not organised consecutively but with gaps in between sessions, which necessitates additional travel time and costs.	3
Time out from workplace	1
Lack of advance notice for training	2
Inability to formulate forward plan re training	1
Poor information re target group & content	
Lack of relevance	
Training overload	
Limited career paths	
Lack of regional/rural focus	
Lack of local trainers – expressed in both areas. In particular there are shortages of good trainers. who are accredited or have particular specialisms. <i>Even a Training the Trainers program would not meet need for trainers who are skilled in their area as well as competent accredited trainers'</i>	7
Sourcing information about trainers – this was expressed in both areas. <i>It's very difficult and usually word of mouth. Loss of trainers to full-time employment (often non-training related) because the work is insecure &amp; short-term.</i>	4
Lack of electronic technology teleconferencing/Skype	
Lack of regional/rural focus. Need for better networking at local level to attract skilled trainers to regions	7

## Notes from Mount Gambier and Port Augusta regional events – combined

### Activity 2. Finding solutions

#### **Funding**

*At strategic level – tendering process is not adjusted for rural disadvantage. There needs to be lobbying for locational disadvantage. There is no acknowledgement of the additional costs of training & development provision within tenders. There should be a sliding scale even within the 'rural areas' - distance/transport costs/*

*Needs to be recognition at managerial levels and higher of inequities in rural areas – additional funding.*

*The overall allocation of funding is not enough. The experience was of difference between Federal & State Gov't funding on this issue. Federal level seemed more aware of training needs.*

*Employers may show more interest in training when they are required to demonstrate evidence of skills or competencies amongst staff to win bids e.g. cultural awareness. Good & bad side to this – tokenism. Compliance route could be used by funders to encourage employers to offer appropriate training.*

*Many programs fund clients, but do not include staff training & development as part of funding. Essential staff development needs are not met, despite being expected as part of delivery of the program e.g. cultural awareness.*

*Organisational KPI's may be met but staff development does not keep pace. Service requirements not met.*

#### **Attitudinal**

*There are varying attitudes towards training and development – some felt not enough value given by their own organisation to training and development. Others have different experience.*

*Difference between larger & smaller organisations was pronounced.*

*Specialised training is not valued.*

#### **Equity**

*There are equity issues at stake here. The DFC policy should reflect this. SACOSS should be reflecting this in its lobbying. SCHS Campaign should acknowledge it in Campaign.*

*VolSA raised this as equity issue because they are not funded to provide training in rural areas for volunteers.*

#### **Building on local networks.**

*People see competition as less of an issue except at tendering times. Even then, they try to develop partnerships which create win-win situations. Example given by Karen from WEDB.*

*NB. Rural and regional centres do present stronger sense of community*

## **Appendix 8: Project participants**

### **Organisations interviewed**

- *Child and Family Welfare Association SA*
- *Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association SA*
- *Junction Community Centre*
- *Lutheran Community Care*
- *Mental Health Coalition SA*
- *Relationships Australia SA*
- *SA Network Drug and Alcohol Services*
- *Uniting Care Wesley Adelaide*
- *Volunteering SA & NT*
- *Youth Affairs Council SA*

### **Individual discussions**

<i>Alison Arblaster</i>	<i>SA Health and Community Services Skills Board</i>
<i>Phil Farrow,</i>	<i>Bedford Industries</i>
<i>Dawn Ogle,</i>	<i>Aboriginal Family Support Services</i>
<i>Kate Reynolds</i>	<i>Independent trainer and consultant</i>
<i>Chanelle Donaldson</i>	<i>National Disability Services</i>
<i>Noelene Wadham</i>	<i>National Disability Services</i>

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