



Queensland Alliance for Mental Health

Inquiry into the Perceptions and Status of Vocational Education and Training Submission

March 2023

Who is QAMH?

The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) is the peak body for the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector in Queensland. We represent more than 100 organisations and stakeholders involved in the delivery of community mental health and wellbeing services across the state. Our role is to reform, promote and drive community mental health and wellbeing service delivery for all Queenslanders, through our influence and collaboration with our members and strategic partners. At a national level, we have a formal collaboration with Community Mental Health Australia and provide input and advice to the work of Mental Health Australia and the National Mental Health Commission where appropriate. Locally, we work alongside our members, government, the Queensland Mental Health Commission and other stakeholders to add value to the sector and act as a strong advocate on issues that impact their operations in Queensland communities.

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Background

QAMH welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (the Committee) as part of its Inquiry into the Perceptions and Status of Vocational Education and Training. The VET system plays an integral role in the delivery of community mental health and wellbeing services, with the Certificate IV in Mental Health and the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work both common pathways into the sector. These two qualifications have undoubtedly been a welcome addition to the VET system. In many instances they have enabled school leavers and those seeking a mid-career change to develop a foundational knowledge of how to support people experiencing mental distress.

However, the delivery of the two Certificate IVs has not been without its challenges. Significant concerns have been raised about the suitability of the content and delivery, as well as a perceived lack of academic support and difficulty securing student placements. These concerns have created a situation where the Certificate IVs are not as valued by industry and the wider community as they perhaps should be. As the sector faces a looming labour shortage, addressing these concerns is paramount in order to attract more students and grow the pipeline into our sector.

Our response to this submission will explore these challenges and pose some potential solutions. It is informed by our extensive knowledge of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector in Queensland, along with valuable insights gained during a number of recent projects focussing on the VET system in Queensland including:

- [Community Mental Health Workforce Project \(2021\)](#)
- [Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Program \(2022\)](#)

Importantly, this year QAMH is partnering with the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy and Planning Branch within Queensland Health to develop a [Community Mental Health Workforce Strategy](#) for the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector. The purpose of the Strategy is to articulate the distinctive workforce issues unique to the sector, as opposed to the mental health system more broadly, and detail the specific actions that will be required to address them. Reforming the VET system will form a major part of this project and has direct relevance to the content of this submission.

Information Available to Students about VET Qualifications and Related Career Pathways

There is a Need to Develop and Promote Recognised Entry Pathways

Awareness of career opportunities and clarity of training pathways into the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector is a key lever for attracting, growing and retaining a suitably skilled workforce. Overall however, the sector suffers from a lack of awareness of formal training pathways available to students and those wanting a mid-career transition.

In QAMH's opinion, the lack of a flagship qualification for the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector creates a particular problem in promoting a career in the sector to those considering undertaking a VET qualification. While many people complete the Certificate IV in Mental Health or the Certificate IV in Peer Work as a gateway to the sector, in reality there are an enormous diversity of educational pathways, ranging from Certificate III to Masters and no clear requisite entry point. Although this undeniably has benefits (eg. people bringing a heterogeneity of professional and educational knowledge to the sector), it also has its drawbacks. For instance, the lack of a recognised core qualification for the sector (comparable to the nursing or allied health professions) means that workers don't always come with a basic skill set to build upon. It also makes it difficult to promote the sector and demonstrate to students, parents, and career counsellors that a career in the sector is an attractive and rewarding career option.

QAMH believes that combating this challenge may involve:

- Developing new entry pathways such as traineeships which can combine on-the-job and off-the-job learning and allow participants to be paid while doing it. This year, QAMH will be asking the Queensland Government to move the Certificate IVs onto the User Choice Program list to enable this process.
- Strengthening partnerships between high schools and the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector to promote the Certificate IV in Mental Health / Peer Work as a well-respected and valued entry pathway into the workforce. For example, this may include presenting at career expos, including information about the sector to careers guidance officers and school-industry partnerships that increase opportunities for students to be exposed to a range of learning experiences to assist them in their career choices and pathways to employment. There is already some work being done in Queensland in this area by the [Gateway to Industry Schools Program \(GISP\) for Community Services Project](#).
- Enhancing/promoting change-of-career pathways, with consideration given to targeting specific populations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, CALD and LGBTIQ+). The

Commonwealth-funded Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work Scholarships which have designated places for First Nations students is being rolled out by QAMH and is an example of one such initiative.

There is a Need to Strengthen the Image and Perceived Value of a Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Career (Particularly to Parents)

We know that parents – who are usually the biggest influence on a student’s career choice - often have a narrow and outdated view of VET and are not very knowledgeable about it¹. The same research shows us that the top concern for parents when considering career choices for their children is that “it is a high-quality, well-respected post-school option”. This does not bode well for our sector: Community Mental Health and Wellbeing careers carry additional stigma due to negative community perceptions of mental illness and people experiencing mental distress. Therefore, despite the possibility of highly rewarding careers with great value to the community, there is a significant extra challenge in promoting VET qualifications and career pathways in this sector. Information that engages with students and parents early on to promote the value of a Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Career is required.

Likewise, demonstrating that the sector holds potential for leadership and career progression is also essential to building the image of Community Health and Wellbeing as an attractive, rewarding and well-respected career path. While clear entry pathways and core qualifications are an immediate priority, there is a current lack of courses targeting senior staff in the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector, a challenge identified in QAMH’s [Community Mental Health Workforce Project](#). While those wishing to advance their career often complete generic leadership courses and qualifications (e.g., Diploma of Leadership and Management), it is concerning that there is no sector-specific training in this area. Ability First Australia and the Multicap Group have recently embarked on a project to invest in leadership capability. This resulted in developing a new qualification in collaboration with the University of New England called the Diploma of Disability Leadership – to be piloted in early 2023. The Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector could consider a similar qualification which would help address a training gap and ensure we have strong and effective leadership at all levels of the sector.

QAMH believes that combating this challenge may involve:

¹ Griffith University. (2019). *Enhancing the Status of Vocational Education and the Occupations it Serves*. [Report \(2\).pdf](#)

- Developing a targeted state-wide campaign to increase awareness of the value of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector, highlighting success stories and promoting job opportunities within the sector
- Raising awareness and understanding of peer work within organisations and across the community to change attitudes, reduce stigma and better understand the value it brings to the mental health system. This process is articulated in the [National Lived Experience \(Peer\) Workforce Development Guidelines](#).
- Increasing positive exposure to mental health workplaces in pre-service education and training to help alleviate negative perceptions about careers in mental health.
- Supporting strategies that support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing workforce including adequate security, physical safety, stigma reduction, stress mitigation measures and support services as outlined in Better Care Together: A Plan for Queensland's State Funded Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Services to 2027 and measures outlined in [Managing the Risk of Psychosocial Hazards at Work: Code of Practice 2022](#).
- Supporting actions of the Draft National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy aimed at targeting public stigma including to deliver anti-stigma training in key sectors, including contact-based initiatives in education and mental health sectors, to launch a social movement of contact-based/awareness initiatives for general public and priority populations and address stigmatizing media representations

Students need information to help determine their suitability for job roles as well as early exposure to the sector to self-select for VET qualifications (which increases completion rates)

We have learned that our sector requires workers to have high alignment to key values such as openness, non-judgement, honesty, hope, resilience, empowerment, empathy and social justice, for potential workers to be “a good fit” for a role in the sector. Likewise, there are generic skills - also referred to as “employability skills” – that are required to successfully complete qualifications and perform job roles. The *Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework*² released by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations identifies employability skills, grouped into three Skill Clusters, which describe the non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin successful participation in work. This includes skill areas such as the ability to connect and work with others, to communicate for work, to plan and organise, to make decisions and to recognise and utilise diverse perspectives.

² NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training. (2011). *A Fair Deal: Apprentices and their Employers in NSW Integrated Research Report*. [a-fair-deal-report.pdf \(employingapprentices.com.au\)](#)

QAMH believes clearly identifying and communicating the values and employability skills which are relevant to job roles in the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector to students is important to help them establish their suitability early on. Research supports the value of this approach for VET qualifications; in *A Fair Deal*, a report on research into the apprenticeship market in NSW, it was found that - even though it would mean cutting the raw number of apprentices and employers recruited - by initially limiting the recruitment pool to the candidates and employers who are best suited to participate in apprenticeships, **completion rates would improve** and the system would produce as many, if not more, qualified tradespeople at a considerably lower cost to government and business. Investing in more effective careers advice and more effective screening tools for attitudinal factors such as the Harrison Test³ are areas that QAMH believe would be worthwhile areas for the Commonwealth to focus on. Good advisory services could both help to identify suitable candidates and redirect candidates to more appropriate options if they are not likely to suit a career in Community Mental Health and Wellbeing.

QAMH believes that combating this challenge may involve:

- Identifying core skills and attitudinal factors for 'best fit' workers in the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector
- Developing an online tool for potential workers to self-assess suitability including values alignment and the skills required to work in the sector (as an important first step in a career pathway).

Perceptions and status of the VET sector

The Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector is Particularly Affected by Stigma and Discrimination

There is an opportunity to address stigma and promote Community Mental Health and Wellbeing careers as rewarding and attractive through targeted campaigns in the broader community, ensuring that the community values and respects the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing workforce. We know there are negative perceptions associated with working in Community Mental Health and Wellbeing, with the sector seen as less prestigious and poorly remunerated compared to other areas

³ The Harrison Test is a comprehensive career test and psychometric tool to analyse career-seeker interests, task preferences, strengths, potential difficulties, and work environment preferences and compare them to the behaviours and requirements for enjoyment and increased likelihood of success from over 700 careers. <https://www.harrisoncareerguide.com/>

of the mental health system, and health more generally. This results in competition with clinical workforces and poor recognition of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector. This may partly be due to what the Productivity Commission refers to as “a culture of superiority that places clinicians and clinical interventions above other service providers.”⁴ Competing with clinical professions for workers has been a constant challenge, and the sector has traditionally been poor at promoting itself as a viable alternative. Many providers employ staff with clinical backgrounds, however they find it difficult to compete with salaries offered to clinical staff in the Hospital and Health Services. Developing and promoting a Community Health and Wellbeing Sector career pathway as an attractive, highly-valued and rewarding career distinct to clinical professions is vital to be able to attract and retain a skilled workforce.

Increasing early positive exposure to mental health workplaces in schools or other pre-service education and training is also important to help reduce stigma and alleviate negative perceptions about careers in the Community Health and Wellbeing Sector. School-industry partnerships may offer value here. We know that when tackling stigma, positive exposure provided as early as possible is the strongest method for achieving change. School-industry partnerships have the potential to offer a range of activities to students from primary school to secondary school, including real world learning projects, mentoring programs, career-taster days, competitions and events, and teacher professional development workshops. These partnerships can exist in a range of models tailored to local contexts and learners’ needs⁵ and in Queensland we have seen the development of the Gateway to Industry Schools Program for Community Services Project which has developed industry partnerships with 29 Queensland schools across 41 locations. QAMH welcomes these developments, and calls for budding school-industry partnerships to be properly resourced, measured and reported at the system level as well as recognised in schools and communicated to parents in order to gain the best outcomes.

QAMH believes that combating this challenge may involve:

- Working with Queensland Health to address stigma and discrimination facing the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector, as part of their state-wide stigma reduction strategy

Employers don’t value VET Qualifications

There is a strong perception within the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector that the current Certificate IVs in Mental Health and Mental Health Peer Work are neither contemporary nor

⁴ Australia. Productivity Commission. (2020). Mental Health Inquiry Report, 1(95), p8

⁵ Torii, K. (2018). *Connecting the Worlds of Learning and Work: Prioritising School-Industry Partnerships in Australia’s Education System*. [Connecting the worlds of learning and work \(cica.org.au\)](https://www.cica.org.au)

align with industry needs. QAMH's Community Mental Health Workforce Project found that, concerning, nearly two thirds of service managers did not believe that the formal qualifications adequately trained the workforce. Specific knowledge gaps included understanding basic mental health conditions, recovery practice, professional boundaries and the provision of psychosocial supports within the NDIS.

This disconnect between course content and coal-face reality is especially true for Queensland's regional, rural and remote areas where there are distinct regional differences. Nationally-developed VET course content will often have less relevance to local communities. The current Certificate IVs do not sufficiently allow for course customisation according to local, place-based industry needs, resulting in students without the relevant skills to operate effectively in the workforce upon receiving their qualification.

In addition, the current Certificate IVs have some inherent problems which raise concerns about their value as a core qualification and ability to be promoted as "the" entry point into a career in the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector. We hear anecdotally that these qualifications need revision in order to remain contemporary, relevant and align with industry needs. Updating current qualifications to reflect these changes would contribute to a qualification that is more widely valued and promoted. As QAMH conducts its state-wide consultation as part of the Workforce Strategy development, we intend to further explore how these particular concerns about content and delivery

The issues that employers in the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector have with the current Certificate IV qualifications are not necessarily unexpected however. At lower level occupations, particularly within service industries, research has shown there may be a lack of recognition by employers of the benefit of qualifications in general and a reluctance on the part of employers to invest in training and development for a largely transitory workforce, in which "soft skills" are key; development of these soft skills (or "supporting competencies") may be more dependent on organisational culture and attitude than training, however good recruitment and skills development practices/commitment to training can maximise outcomes and value for employers (Smith and Brennan Kemmis 2010).⁶ Likewise, the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector is an emerging one undergoing rapid change, and research shows that the higher the level of enterprise change and innovation, the lower the level of value and use made of qualifications by employers (Blythe and Bowman 2005)⁷. In these enterprises, "just-in-time" skills development is the focus, rather than long-term strategic planning (Blythe and Bowman 2005). Across industries,

⁶ Smith E, Brennan Kemmis R. (2010). *What industry wants: employers' preferences for training*. *Education & training* (London), 52 (3): 214-225, 2010.

⁷ Blythe, A, Bowman, K. (2005). *Employers and qualifications: at a glance*. [Employers and qualifications: at a glance | VOCEDplus, the international tertiary education and research database](#).

responsiveness to shifts in industry needs, ability to drive innovation, ability to attract skilled workers as a viable career path and ability to drive increases in productivity are things that employers/industry value in qualifications (Bowman, Callan and McKenna 2021).⁸ These broader issues with how employers view qualifications indicate to QAMH that creative solutions more closely aligned with the needs of employers are required.

It is worth noting that the VET system is undergoing major changes at federal level with Jobs and Skills Councils now responsible for Industry Clusters that replace the previous industry engagement system comprised of Industry Reference Committees. We are hopeful that the new system will elevate industry leadership in VET so industry can more effectively address current workforce challenges and shape qualification development at a local level. It is essential that these reforms strengthen the VET system, give service providers a stronger voice, and ensure qualifications align with the skills that are in demand on the ground.

QAMH believes that combating this challenge may involve:

- Aligning current qualifications to what employers need, by reviewing and redesigning the current Certificate IVs (in partnership with the newly appointed HumanAbility Jobs and Skills Council) to ensure these qualifications are valued by the sector and wider community.
- Developing new entry pathways such as traineeships which can combine on-the-job and off-the-job learning and allow participants to be paid while doing it.
- Exploring and developing the use of microcredentials to offer employers options to upskill their workforce quickly and cost effectively to meet “just in time” needs.
- Explore and develop support options for employers such as the CareerForce model in New Zealand (described in further detail below) which supports employers to deliver entry-level training. In the CareerForce Model, The nationally-recognised Certificate IV in Health and Wellbeing (largely equivalent to the Australian Certificate IV in Mental Health) is delivered over 18-24 months as an apprenticeship that is well-supported and resourced with a team of apprenticeship ‘Advisors’ providing pastoral care and support.

Extra Support is Needed for our Emerging Peer Workforce Completing Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work

⁸ Bowman K, Callan V J, McKenna S. (2021). *Engaging more employers in nationally recognised training to develop their workforce: employer interviews – support document 3*. Adelaide: NCVET.

Recent years have seen a major shift towards employing more peer workers in mental health services both in Queensland and other jurisdictions. Several recent reports such as the final report from the Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry (Nov 2020), the House of Representatives Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Report (Oct 2021) and the Queensland Parliament's Mental Health Select Committee report (June 2022) all recognise that the peer workforce is an increasingly important part of the mental health system, and one that needs greater recognition and support.

This increased focus on the value of a peer workforce has put renewed emphasis on the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work which, developed in 2012, was touted as the nationally recognised qualification for peer workers. The 12-month course is offered at five RTOs in Queensland and offers participants the opportunity to build on their lived experience of mental health conditions as either a consumer or carer. The blend of theory, practical coursework and discussions with other peer workers allows exploration of recovery-oriented and trauma-informed care, dealing with loss and grief and navigating the mental health system. However, the rollout of the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work has not been without its challenges.

In 2021, QAMH, in partnership with Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network and Brisbane North Peer Participation in Mental Health Services Network, conducted a state-wide survey to explore the supply, demand and, most importantly, the quality of available training in Queensland for the emerging peer workforce. The survey showed that many respondents who had undertaken the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work felt unsupported, were overwhelmed by the course content and assessment requirements, and struggled finding quality student placements. Regional, rural and remote students, who are able to complete the qualification online, are particularly disadvantaged. Geographic isolation augments their sense of being unsupported and the limited number of local service providers makes finding students placements difficult. Attracting (and retaining) students in VET qualifications that grow this emerging peer workforce is critical to the Community Health and Wellbeing Sector and will require quality delivery and attention to the support provided to students. It will also require appropriate screening support to help students to decide whether they are suited to the role and hold the core skills required to complete qualifications and work in the sector.

QAMH believes that combating this challenge may involve:

- Supporting the entry level workforce, particularly Lived Experience (peer) workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community mental health workers to obtain minimum and desirable skills.
- Providing scholarships to obtain Certificate IV and Diploma Level Qualifications in Lived Experience (peer) and/or mental health as per Peer Work Scholarships recently funded by the Commonwealth and being delivered by QAMH.

- Providing Peer Mentoring Programs to support development of Lived Experience Workforce is essential (as evidenced by our project detailed below).

Examples of Successful Partnerships

QAMH consider the following existing programs examples of successful partnerships that might assist in reducing barriers and creating career pathways and secure employment opportunities for students:

Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Program

The Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Program (the Program) was developed by QAMH, Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network, TAFE Queensland and WorkAbility Queensland in response to concerns about the supply, demand, quality, and barriers to completing training for the peer workforce in Queensland. This pilot was funded by the Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, through the National Disability Insurance Scheme Training and Skills Support Strategy.

The Program, which ran from March to December 2022, aimed to increase student retention and qualification completion rates by developing and trialing support arrangements for an existing cohort of students enrolled in the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.

Lived Experience Peer Mentors were employed at two campuses (Gold Coast and Mooloolaba) to:

- Provide support through individual mentoring and facilitated group reflective practice
- Create partnerships locally with service providers to better connect industry to vocational providers
- Support students in navigating student placement requirements, and
- Identify emerging issues impacting students

Thirty students chose to participate in the Program. Two thirds of the participants were over 40 years old and nearly as many identified as female. A total of 101 individual sessions and 30 group sessions were delivered, identifying several common areas of concern among students. These included time management, stress and self-care; the role of a peer worker; work opportunities post qualification; and understanding TAFE processes.

The program was found to be overwhelmingly successful, as evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative data, collected through surveys, interviews, and mentor notes. Over the six-month period, students supported by Peer Mentors were twice as likely to continue with their studies.

Survey results demonstrated:

- 90 per cent of participants either strongly agreed or agreed the Program increased their confidence to complete their studies, while the remaining students were neutral
- Almost all respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my participation in the Peer Mentoring Project helped me feel more prepared to resolve problems and issues with my studies”
- 90 per cent of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my participation in the Peer Mentoring Project helped me connect and broaden my peer networks”

The below comments by survey respondents indicate individual participant perceptions of the support provided by the Program.

The Peer Mentors prioritised the students and provided a safe space to discuss whatever they needed - they listened.

They recognised their privilege and could acknowledge the impacts and barriers of systemic disadvantage faced by many of the students.

A different, more equal power dynamic than that between teacher and student.

They role modelled Peer Work.

They understood Peer Work in Practice and shared real-life examples then supported discussions to translate theory into practice.

They understood the TAFE system and adult learning and shared their wisdom in supporting navigation.

They offered students optimism and hope, reassurance, and encouragement.

They shared their resources, networks, and connections to create possibilities.

QAMH is advocating for expansion of the Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Program to recurrent funding for all RTOs offering the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work. These programs should include Lived Experienced Peer Mentors, provide online and face-to-face opportunities for support,

and be independent yet co-located within the RTO. We believe these initiatives will address some of the barriers to completing training for the peer workforce in Queensland.

Careerforce Apprenticeships

New Zealand-based company Careerforce offers a program that supports work-based training opportunities for those working in the health, disability, mental health, aged care, rehabilitation, social and community services sectors. The nationally-recognised Certificate IV in Health and Wellbeing (largely equivalent to the Australian Certificate IV in Mental Health) is delivered over 18-24 months as an apprenticeship that is well-supported and resourced with a team of apprenticeship 'Advisors' providing pastoral care and support.

The training is employer-led, where the employer is responsible for the delivery of training, and assessment of employees who are enrolled in Careerforce programs. While Careerforce does not deliver the training, it does provide support to employers and their employees, including workforce development planning, the provision of learning and assessment resources, and pastoral care to support trainee success.

QAMH believes there is strong case to be made for exploring whether a similar apprenticeship/traineeship program could be developed in Queensland for the two Certificate IVs, in order to address some of the workforce shortages currently facing the sector. This would allow trainees to be supported as they gain nationally-recognised qualifications in their location of choice. This place-based solution has particular relevance to service providers in regional, rural and remote areas as it allows for recruitment of local workers who could be taught the relevant skills and knowledge while 'on the job'. QAMH is currently developing a Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy and will be exploring the feasibility and appetite for traineeships as part of this work.

Microcredential Development

As outlined above, there is a significant skill gap for those commencing work in the sector. This is particularly challenging for regional, rural and remote service providers who are often forced to recruit people without requisite skills and knowledge. QAMH, in partnership with Workability Queensland and TAFE Queensland, has developed a microcredential called 'Navigating the NDIS for the Psychosocial Workforce'. The micro-credential is now available for free on the TAFE Queensland learning platform and covers definitions of mental illness, mental health and wellbeing, how to navigate the mental health system, recovery-oriented practice and trauma-informed care. This training has been well-received within the sector, where it is seen as a valuable addition to induction of new staff entering the community mental health workforce, but also to other stakeholders supporting people experiencing mental health and wellbeing challenges. QAMH

believes there is an opportunity for development of further microcredentials to fill the priority skills gap in the workforce, providing a valuable resource for regional, rural and remote service providers to upskill their staff. In the context of a rapidly evolving delivery environment, the use of microcredentials offers employers the options to upskill their workforce quickly and cost effectively to meet “just in time” needs.

QAMH Recommendations for Commonwealth Programs

QAMH believes there are opportunities for the Commonwealth to positively influence the issues impacting the Community Health and Wellbeing Sector described above. These may involve engaging with or supporting existing efforts by employers and the Queensland Government, and include:

- Supporting the review and redesign of the Certificate IV in Mental Health and Certificate IV in Peer Work so they remain contemporary, relevant, aligned with industry needs and valued by the community;
- Supporting the Certificate IV in Mental Health and Certificate IV in Peer Work to be delivered as traineeships and provide government funding to incentivise employers to take trainees;
- Funding development of career-progressing VET qualifications such as a Diploma in Mental Health Leadership;
- Providing Commonwealth funding for stronger promotion of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector (that is distinct from mental health or health) to school leavers, parents and teachers. This may be in conjunction with the work already being done by the Gateway to Industry Schools Program for Community Services Project, funded by the Queensland Government;
- Developing and embedding processes to ensure students accepted into Certificate IV qualifications are capable of completion and have values aligned with the sector in order to set realistic expectations for students, improve completion rates, ensure high quality and improve the reputation of the sector
- Supporting the actions and recommendations articulated in the Draft National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy⁹, that will work to reduce public stigma towards the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector, including:
 - delivering anti-stigma training in key sectors;

⁹ Australia. National Mental Health Commission. (2022). (Draft) National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy. [apo-nid320912_0.pdf](#)

- including contact-based initiatives in education and mental health sectors;
- launching a social movement of contact-based/awareness initiatives for general public and priority populations; and
- addressing stigmatising media representations

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation process. We look forward to continuing to work with the Australian Government to better the lives of people living with mental distress. Please do not hesitate to contact QAMH should you require any further information.