

# Research Report No. 1

## NTSSS Advice Project

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## About the project

### Purpose

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS) Advice Project forms part of Workability Qld's NTSSS Strategy and Governance Project, which provides strategic advice to industry and governments on matters related to the NDIS workforce in Queensland, including advice on skilling priorities, VET investment and improvements in the quality of training delivery to support the future NDIS workforce.

The information and advice gathered through the NTSSS Advice Project will enable Workability Qld to:

- provide detailed advice to the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) about VET investment effectiveness specific to disability services and the NDIS reform
- recommend robust industry benchmarks for RTOs delivering NDIS qualifications and skill sets
- develop business cases for recommended changes to the VET Investment Plan.

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### Scope

The NDIS workforce is very broad, ranging from support workers, allied health professionals and other specialists who provide services directly to participants, to support coordinators, local area coordinators and planners who manage and administer aspects of the NDIS system, through to managers, administrators and other staff who support the running of organisations that deliver services to participants. As the NDIS rolls out, an even wider range of roles are relevant to the workforce supporting people with disabilities, including cleaning, home maintenance, sport and recreation, tourism, hospitality, and many other sectors.

National Disability Services (NDS) has identified ten different job families in its Disability Career Planner and Capability Framework:

1. Direct Service Delivery (DSD)
2. Specialist and Professional Services (SPS)
3. Corporate and Service Support (CSS)
4. Corporate Support (CS)
5. Management (M)
6. Executive Management (EM)
7. Business Enterprises (BM)
8. Employment Services Delivery (ESD)
9. Employment Services (ES)
10. Business Growth and Positioning (BGP)

(National Disability Services 2014)

This project has been established to provide advice to DESBT, which has responsibility for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. Therefore, the focus of the research is on vocationally-oriented roles, rather than professional ones (such as allied health professionals). These roles fall predominantly within the family of Direct Service Delivery and include disability support workers and paraprofessional roles, such as allied health assistants, that support specialists and professionals.

Managerial roles that have responsibility for supervising and rostering those providing direct support services will also be considered within the project, as many of these are likely to fall within the scope of the VET sector.

Technician roles for service providers delivering Assistive Technology services fall within the realm of the VET sector. However, we consider these to be outside the scope of this report due to the fact that the relevant qualifications fall outside the Community Services and Health industry. Nonetheless, we will be attuned to any issues that may be raised in relation to such roles and record them for possible future work in this area.

Similarly, where issues arise that relate to other job families outside the scope of this research (e.g. allied health and other specialist services), they will be recorded for possible future work – particularly if they relate to potential career pathways from Direct Service Delivery roles into higher level managerial and professional roles.

## Terminology

The terms **disability industry** and **disability sector** are interpreted in this project as referring to service providers delivering services to people with a disability (which include NDIS registered providers, unregistered providers, organisations, companies, sole traders, for profit and not-for-profit providers), including the organisations and people administering and managing aspects of the NDIS system (such as local area coordinators, support coordinators, planners and plan managers), but excluding government departments and agencies.

The term **disability support workforce** is used in some of the literature and we have interpreted this to mean the workforce of the organisations, companies and sole traders described in the industry/sector above.

We have used the terms **direct service delivery** and **support worker** to describe the roles and workers providing support services directly to people with a disability (which is the primary focus of this research), but excluding allied health professionals and other specialists, as well as those administering and managing aspects of the NDIS system as described in the industry/sector above.

## About this report

This Research Report No. 1 provides a foundation for the remainder of the project by outlining the current situation for training and development of the NDIS direct service delivery workforce in Queensland and identifying issues for further exploration in the remainder of the project.

The findings and issues outlined in this report are based on analysis of training data provided by DESBT, Workforce Wizard data from NDS, service provider and participant data from NDIA and a brief literature review.

These findings and issues have also informed the lines of inquiry for a series of consultations and a survey, the findings of which will be detailed in a supplementary report.

## The current situation

### The NDIS workforce

Early projections for the roll-out of the NDIS in Queensland anticipated that the number of participants requiring support would increase by 43,000 people between 2016 and 2019 (almost doubling the number of people receiving support), while the workforce required to meet this growing demand for services would more than double (NDIS 2016).

Transition to the NDIS has however, been slower than projected. At the end of September 2018, a total of 24,741 NDIS plans had been approved in Queensland, which represents only 57% of estimates for this period (NDIS 2018a).

The Australian disability support workforce grew by 13.8% in the 2017-18 financial year, compared with National employment growth of 2.6% between May 2017 and May 2018 for all Australian industries (National Disability Services 2018d).

At the same time, there are reports of increasing recruitment difficulties from the sector, with 63% of respondents to a 2018 National Disability Services (NDS) survey experiencing moderate or extreme difficulties in

recruitment. Particular difficulties were experienced with recruitment for various allied health roles, as well as for local area coordinators/planners, disability support workers, managers/supervisors of disability support and support coordinators (National Disability Services 2018a).

These existing recruitment difficulties, when combined with the fact that there is still considerable potential growth in the number of NDIS participants and the supporting workforce, suggests that there is much more to be done to build a skilled workforce to meet the needs of NDIS participants and service providers in Queensland.

## **Training and development options**

Not only are there a diverse range of jobs within the disability sector, there is also a diverse range of pathways through which people enter those job roles.

Whilst in some industry sectors formal qualifications are a mandatory requirement for entering the sector, for entry level disability support workers this is not the case.

The value placed on qualifications varies considerably across the sector, with previous research highlighting that “having a potential worker who is ‘the right fit’ for the sector, for the organisation and for the specific clients they will work with, is far more important than having a qualification” (Jobs Queensland 2018, p13).

While some participants or organisations do look for support workers who have a formal qualification or are working towards one, others feel that this “gets in the way” (Jobs Queensland 2018, p13) and feel very strongly that qualifications should never be made a mandatory requirement for these roles.

The most common qualifications amongst those support workers who do have one are the Certificate III in Disability Work (until 2015) and the Certificate III in Individual Support. However, other qualifications in disability, community services and health services are also common.

These nationally recognised vocational qualifications are gained through undertaking training with a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) through face-to-face training ‘off-the-job’, face-to-face in the workplace, online learning, or a combination of these. All of these qualifications also require a compulsory work placement as part of their training.

Previous research identified that many service providers find that taking learners on work placement and/or providing other work experience opportunities for job seekers provides a valuable pathway for recruiting new employees (Jobs Queensland 2018).

Traineeships are another pathway for new entrants, providing the opportunity to gain a qualification while also being employed. They are available for adults as well as school students.

There are also various other government-funded programs and pathways to support young people and job seekers in building skills, gaining experience and/or gaining employment in the sector.

Nationally recognised skill sets provide another pathway for inducting new entrants into the sector, or for further developing the skills and knowledge of existing workers.

Alternatively, service provider organisations may conduct their own inductions and training ‘in house’.

Nationally recognised qualifications aimed at new entrants to the sector tend to be at the Certificate III level, while higher level qualifications at Certificate IV and above are generally aimed at existing/skilled workers who are seeking to further develop their skills and support career progression. Previous research, however, identified that under current industrial relations arrangements there is no financial advantage for employees in the sector to have a Certificate IV, rather than the entry level Certificate III (Jobs Queensland 2018). Certificate II level qualifications tend to be used for building foundational skills and as pathways into Certificate III qualifications.

Many of the nationally-recognised qualifications and skill sets commonly undertaken by workers in the sector, or those seeking to enter the sector, are funded by the Queensland Government. These are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Relevant qualifications and skill sets currently funded by DESBT<sup>1</sup>

Qualification or Skill Set	Nationally recognised training ID	Traineeship	Certificate 3 Guarantee / Higher Level Skills	Other programs
Certificate III in Individual Support	CHC33015	✓	✓	Skilling Queenslanders for Work
Certificate IV in Disability	CHC43115		For existing workers, parents and carers	
Induction to Disability Skill Set	CHCSS00081		For new workers, parents and carers	
Disability Work – Behaviour Support skill set	CHCSS00096		For existing workers, parents and carers	
Certificate IV in Mental Health	CHC43315		For existing workers in community services and health	
Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work	CHC43515		✓	
Certificate II in Community Services	CHC22015		✓	Skilling Queenslanders for Work VET in Schools
Certificate III in Community Services	CHC32015	✓	✓	Skilling Queenslanders for Work
Certificate IV in Community Services	CHC42015		For existing workers, parents and carers	
Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance	HLT33015		✓	

<sup>1</sup> Note that each of these funding programs have eligibility requirements attached to them.

## What the data tells us

### NDIS data

#### Participant Characteristics

NDIS participant characteristics provide some indication of where workforce demands may be growing and what the desired skills and characteristics of the workforce might be.

As at 30 September 2018, of Queensland participants with an approved plan:

- 31% were aged 0 – 14 years
- 19% were aged 15 – 24 years
- 21% were aged 25 – 44 years
- 28% were aged 45 years and over
- the most common primary disabilities were an Intellectual Disability (28%) and Autism (26%)
- 8% identified as Indigenous
- 4% identified as being from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) group.

(NDIS 2018b)

Other Queensland data also showed that as of 31 March 2018, the gender make up of registered NDIS participants was 63% male and 37% female (Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors 2018).

### Plan management and support coordination

NDIS participants have various options for the management of their plans:

1. Agency managed - where the NDIA pays providers directly and participants are required to use NDIS registered providers for services
2. Plan managed – where a registered Plan Manager can purchase supports on behalf of participants from either registered or unregistered providers and assist participants pay service providers and claim payment from the NDIA
3. Self-managed - where participants can use registered or unregistered service providers and are responsible for direct payment to service providers. Plans may be partly or fully self-managed.

Of the 8,217 plans approved in Queensland in the quarter ending 30 September 2018, only 47% were Fully Agency Managed, compared with 68% across all previous quarters. At the same time, 24% of plans from the September 2018 quarter were partly or fully self-managed, compared with 17% across previous quarters. There was also a significant change in the proportion of Plan Managed participants at this time (29% in September 2018 quarter, compared with 16% across previous quarters).

The proportion of NDIS participants that have had support coordination included in their approved plan has also been steadily increasing, from 26% in the September 2017 quarter to 46% in the September 2018 quarter, suggesting a growing demand for support coordinators.

### Registered Providers

According to NDIS data for Queensland (NDIS 2018a), as at 30 September 2018 there were 4,110 registered NDIS providers in Queensland. Of these, 2,562 (62%) were companies/organisations and 1,548 (38%) were sole traders. However, only 37% of these registered providers were active as of that time, with the remainder yet to have any recorded activity.

The most common “registration groups” (i.e. areas of service provision) of the active registered providers were:

- Therapeutic Supports: 636 providers
- Household tasks: 305 providers
- Participation in community, social and civic activities: 270 providers
- Daily Personal Activities: 249 providers
- Assistance in coordinating or managing life stages, transitions and supports: 244 providers.

Interestingly, 25% of service providers received 80-95% of the dollars paid for major registration groups.

## **Workforce characteristics**

Compared to the rest of the workforce, the Australian disability support workforce is female dominated (70% workers are female compared with 46% across the Australian workforce). The workforce in regional Queensland is even more female dominated, with women accounting for 75% of direct support workers in Northern, Central and South West Queensland (National Disability Services 2018c).

The Australian disability support workforce is also older than the general workforce: 44% are aged 45 and over as compared with 39% for the whole of the Australian workforce (National Disability Services 2018a). In March 2018, Queensland had the oldest disability support workforce of any state or territory, with 49% aged 45 and over (National Disability Services 2018d), while in Northern Queensland almost 60% of disability support workers fall into this age group (National Disability Services 2018c).

Formal qualifications are not a significant feature amongst new recruits to the Australian disability sector workforce. Reporting by NDS from its Workforce Wizard data (National Disability Services 2018d) shows that as at December 2017, approximately 20% of newly recruited workers had a disability-related qualification at Certificate III or above.

For some organisations this may be related to employer policy, as 24% of responding organisations reported that all new recruits had a disability-related qualification. At the same time, 20% of organisations did not recruit any new workers with formal qualifications.

The data also showed that small organisations were more likely to recruit people with a disability-related certificate qualification than large ones.

In Queensland, the emphasis placed on qualifications is even lower. The state had the lowest proportion of newly recruited workers with a disability-related qualification of any state or territory, with 15% of new recruits formally qualified. Victoria had the highest proportion at 30%.

### Conclusions and issues for further exploration

1. There are significant differences in the profiles of participants and workers. For example:
  - only 28% of QLD participants are aged 45 and over, while the disability support workforce is comprised of 44% of workers in this age group (and up to 60% in some QLD regions)
  - the gender make up of QLD participants is 63% male and 37% female, whereas for the workforce it is 30% male and 70% female (and up to 75% female in some QLD regions).

With the focus now on better aligning support workers with participant needs and choices, efforts are being made to attract more younger workers and males to the sector. Training strategies also need to ensure that younger people and males are considered in terms of marketing efforts, training pathways and training delivery.
2. The most common primary disabilities amongst QLD participants are Intellectual Disability and Autism. The project will explore whether the skills needed to support these people are adequately being addressed in current training products.
3. The value placed on formal qualifications in Queensland appears to be even lower than in other parts of Australia. The project will consider what might be done to increase the perceived value of training and qualifications in the sector, including investigating initiatives in other states (see further discussion in the section on 'What the literature tells us').
4. The growing numbers of self-managed participants highlights the importance of identifying the needs and preferences of this group in relation to workforce skills, not just those of service provider organisations who employ workers. The project will ensure these views are captured through consultations during the project.
5. Similarly, with 38% of registered service providers being sole traders, these views also need to be captured. Although, with 80-95% of NDIS dollars being received by 25% of registered service providers, the needs of larger providers are likely to be more significant.
6. With increasing numbers of plans including support coordination, the role and skill needs of support coordinators also warrants further investigation.

## Training data

*For this first research report we have had access to DESBT data for government funded training in:*

- Certificate III in Individual Support
- Certificate II in Community Services
- Certificate III in Community Services
- Certificate IV in Community Services.

Whilst these qualifications are also undertaken on a fee for service basis by learners, this has not been included in our analysis as the fee for service data set (reported on by NCVET) is still not complete, and it does not have much relevance to the recommendations this project will make to DESBT about their VET Investment Plan.

As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 below, commencements in these qualifications increased significantly between 2015-16 and 2016-17. This reflects the fact that the current qualifications were only released in December 2015, replacing the previous Certificate III in Disability). the NDIS rollout commenced in Queensland in July 2016 (with early rollout in the Townsville region from January 2016). Between 2016-17 and 2017-18 commencements increased very slightly across all qualifications, with the exception of Certificate II in Community Services, which experienced a decline.

Figure 1. Government funded commencements in CHC33015 - Certificate III in Individual Support

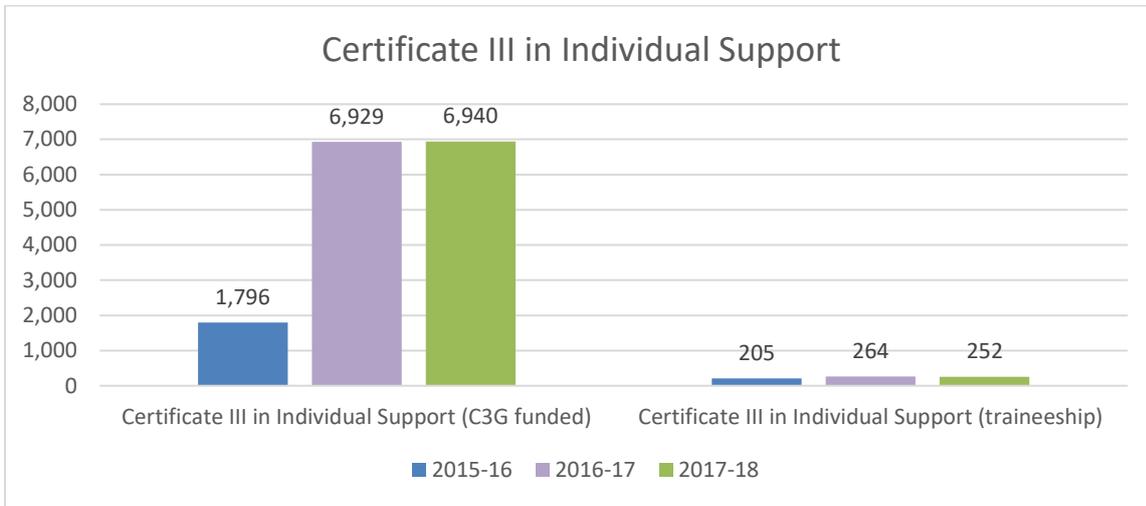
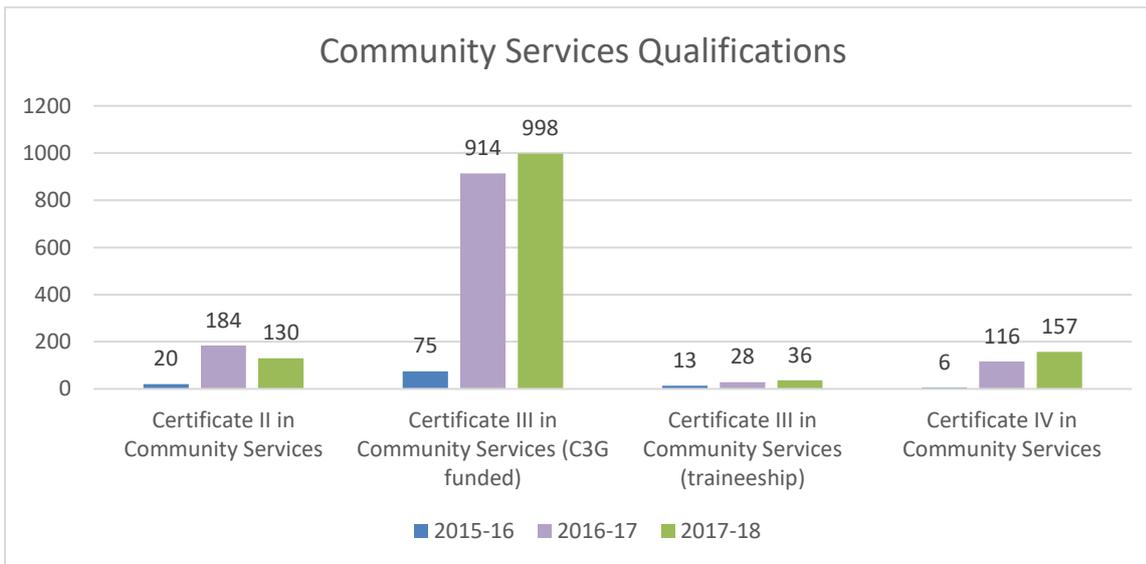


Figure 2. Government funded commencements in Community Services Qualifications



Attachment A also illustrates the numbers of commencements in each of these qualifications by training region in 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18. It should be noted that figures for the Certificate III Guarantee (C3G) funded Certificate III in Individual Support include commencements in all three qualification specialisations (i.e. ageing, disability, home and community), not just the disability specialisation.

The enrolment data also shows that:

- The North Coast region (which encompasses Bundaberg, Fraser Coast, Gympie, Sunshine Coast, Caboolture, Strathpine and Redcliffe) has consistently had the highest number of commencements in the C3G funded Certificate III in Individual Support of any region across the three years. This aligns with NDIS projections that Maryborough and Bundaberg would be in the top five Queensland regions for growth in demand, both in terms of absolute numbers and dollars spent (NDIS 2016).
- Traineeships, which are available in the Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) and the Certificate III in Community Services, attract very low numbers of commencements when compared to non-traineeships.

However, commencements in Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) traineeships have been increasing in the Darling Downs South West and North Coast regions. Commencements in Certificate III in Community Services traineeships have also been increasing in the Central Queensland and North Coast regions.

- Commencements in the Certificate II in Community Services have increased in the South East region and Darling Downs South West region over the three years, but have declined across all other regions.

One of the ongoing problems with the analysis of training data for the Certificate III in Individual Support is that it has not been possible to identify how many of the enrolments were specifically in the Disability specialisation.

Whilst this is still an ongoing issue, DESBT has also provided data on enrolments in individual units of competency in the Certificate III in Individual Support for the purposes of this research. Analysis of enrolments in the four elective units of competency that make up the disability specialisation provide a rough indication of the approximate numbers and characteristics of learners enrolled in the disability specialisation of this qualification.

Table 2 below shows the enrolments in the Government funded Certificate III in Individual support across the period 1 July 2015 to 3 May 2019, as well as the enrolments in each of the four disability specialisation electives over these three years.

**Table 2. Enrolments in Certificate III in Individual Support and units of competency required for disability specialisation (Government funded only)**

Qualification or Unit	Nationally recognised training ID	Number of enrolments 1/07/2015 – 3/05/2019	Unit enrolments as % of qualification enrolments
<b>Certificate III in Individual Support (all specialisations)</b>	CHC33015	20,862	-
Contribute to ongoing skills development using a strengths-based approach	CHCDIS001	3,566	17%
Follow established person-centred behaviour supports	CHCDIS002	4,414	21%
Support community participation and social inclusion	CHCDIS003	4,085	20%
Facilitate the empowerment of people with disability	CHCDIS007	4,166	20%
<b>Total number of individuals enrolled in one or more of the relevant units of competency</b>		6,547	31%

A total of 31% of individuals enrolled in the Certificate III in Individual Support enrolled in one or more of the four disability specialisation electives. However, as some of these units of competency also belong to other specialisations, this is not an accurate indicator of the numbers of students enrolling in the disability specialisation.

DESBT data does show that of the 20,862 enrolments in the qualification over this period, a total of 2,426 individuals had completed all four units making up the disability specialisation (although they may not yet have completed the full qualification at the end of the data period). This represents 12% of the total enrolments over the period.

While this figure does not account for the fact that some individuals may be continuing enrolments in the relevant units of competency and may well go on to complete the specialisation, it provides a very rough indication of the number of individuals who are likely to work or seek work with people with disability on completion of their training.

Further analysis of the enrolments in the unit, 'Facilitate the empowerment of people with disability' (CHCDIS007), which is a required elective in both the Disability and Home and Community specialisations, has highlighted a number of characteristics of these learners:

- 7% identified themselves as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 52% were funded under DESBT's C3G program, 36% through Skilling Queenslanders for Work, 7% through Back to Work programs for job seekers, and the remainder through other smaller funding programs
- The number of new enrolments in this unit grew by 51% from 2016-17 to 2017-18 (from 1,171 to 1,764)
- The age profile of learners is slightly younger than that of the current disability sector workforce, with only 35.5% of learners aged over 45. A further 45% are in the 25-45 years age bracket, while 18% are aged 18-24 and 1.5% aged 15-17.
- The largest proportion of learners are located in the Wide Bay region, which is consistent with the high numbers of enrolments in the Certificate III in Individual Support (all specialisations) in the North Coast region to which Wide Bay belongs. Distribution of learners across other training regions are listed in Table 3 below.

**Table 3. Enrolments in Unit CHCDIS007 - Facilitate the empowerment of people with disability, by region**

Training Region	Number of enrolments 1/07/2015 – 3/05/2019	Proportion of total enrolments
Wide Bay	646	16%
Brisbane (inner city, north, south, west)	460	11%
Townsville	474	11%
Toowoomba	379	9%
Gold Coast	364	9%
Moreton Bay - North	325	8%
Cairns	291	7%
Sunshine Coast	247	6%
Logan-Beaudesert	236	6%
Mackay	176	4%
Fitzroy	142	3%
Ipswich	126	3%
Darling Downs - Maranoa	106	3%
Brisbane (east)	99	2%
QLD - Outback	60	1%

Moreton Bay - South	18	<1%
Not Stated	17	<1%

*Conclusions and issues for further exploration*

7. Despite mixed perceptions of the value of qualifications in the disability sector, people are engaging with the training system. Enrolments are increasing slightly across all the qualifications examined so far (apart from the Cert II, which experienced decline). It would be interesting to know whether learners are gaining employment after training; although the data may not be available to determine this.
8. Some early patterns of correlations between training enrolments and NDIS participant projections are emerging. The project will further analyse data at a regional level to identify where there may be correlations and misalignments between training enrolment patterns and NDIS participant numbers and explore these in regional consultations. The numbers of enrolments in “QLD – Outback” and other rural and remote areas will be of particular focus.
9. The project will identify (through a survey and other consultations) what other qualifications and skill sets are being used or sought amongst the disability sector and obtain and analyse training data for these for the second research report.
10. Although it is a very rough calculation, it may be useful to use the figure of 12% as an indicator of the minimum proportion of enrolments in the Certificate III in Individual Support undertaking the disability specialisation until such time as data collection processes can identify this more accurately.
11. Although the majority of training enrolments are funded through C3G program, Skilling Queenslanders for Work appears to be another important pathway for building skills for the sector.
12. The age profile of learners is much younger than that of the existing disability sector workforce, which may begin to address some of the issues of mismatch between NDIS participants and workforce profiles.

## Findings from the literature

The brief literature review conducted for the project sought to understand whether available qualifications, delivery methods and training pathways are meeting industry need, what factors influence training uptake and what particular skill needs might be required in regional locations or for specific participant cohorts. We also made a note of successful or promising approaches from around Australia to inform the remainder of this project.

We discovered answers to some, but not all, of our questions. While we can report on NDIS workforce characteristics, skill needs and factors affecting training uptake, there is little specific research around the suitability of qualifications, training products and training pathways. This has informed our questions for industry consultation: we’ll aim to test what we discovered through the literature and gather industry insights to help us fill in the gaps.

## The Workforce

The disability sector workforce is changing

Despite workforce growth across the sector, there's a downward trend in hours of work per week, most notable in large and medium organisations (National Disability Services 2018b).

Nationally, the disability workforce is increasingly casualised, particularly in small to medium organisations and organisations that are female dominated (National Disability Services 2018b). Casualisation in the disability support workforce is even higher in Queensland than the rest of Australia. "Queensland's average workforce growth rate in the past seven quarters is 0.4% per quarter for the permanent workforce, compared with growth of 13.7% per quarter for the casual workforce. This compares with a national workforce growth rate in the same period of 1.2% per quarter for the permanent workforce and 10.4% for the casual workforce." (National Disability Services 2018c)

Higher turnover rates exist amongst the casual workforce (National Disability Services 2018b). This trend is evident nationally and in Queensland, with the exception of Northern Queensland where the level of workforce turnover is similar for both casual and permanent workers (NDS 2018c).

Although rising casualisation is evident across Queensland, it's particularly high in Northern Queensland, while permanent employment in Northern, Central and South West Queensland (7%) is less than half the national average (14.3%) (National Disability Services 2018c).

Recruitment difficulties continue, especially in regional areas

Employer reports are mixed in relation to recruitment difficulties but overall the data points to increasing difficulties across the sector and greater levels of difficulty in regional areas. In a national survey conducted by National Disability Services, 63% of employers reported extreme or moderate difficulty in recruiting disability support workers; an increase from 42% in 2017. On the flipside, nearly 40% of providers said that it was 'easy' or 'not hard to recruit' support workers. Managers and supervisors also became 'difficult-to recruit' in 2018 for 50% of respondents, compared to only around one third in 2017 (National Disability Services 2018a).

While recruitment difficulties appear to be worsening, retention difficulties may be easing for some providers, with the number of respondents saying they were finding it 'extremely or moderately difficult' to retain disability support workers falling by nearly 10% from 2017 to 2018 (National Disability Services 2018a).

The allied health workforce is different and even harder to recruit

The allied health workforce is even more female dominated than the rest of the disability workforce and tends to be younger, have higher numbers of permanent workers and is fairly evenly split between full and part time workers (National Disability Services 2018b). Recruitment difficulties are worse in the allied health professions as compared with other roles in the disability workforce, with psychologists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and occupational therapists the top four hardest-to-recruit occupations (National Disability Services 2018a).

## Skill needs vary by role

Not surprisingly, there is consensus in the literature that delivering the NDIS vision of user choice and control necessitates a major shift in the skill needs of the disability workforce. While much of the literature focuses on direct support workers, it is worth noting that skill needs vary by role.

For organisations there will be a need for skills in leadership, management, mentoring, supervision, marketing, brokering and brand and reputation management as organisations transition to a user-led, market environment (Skills IQ 2017). Culturally competent organisations will be essential if the NDIS is to redress current levels of underservicing to, and overrepresentation by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities. This issue is further discussed later in the report.

For direct support workers, both the nature of work and the work environment are changing. Chenoweth and Ward describe a shift from “professional services” to “crafted services”. In this model, professional services stem from the belief that people have ‘problems’ and experts have ‘solutions’ while in crafted services a worker comes “unfettered by expectations or limitations and works with people with disability to fulfil their personal plans and goals” (cited in Workability Qld 2017a). As many participants choose to receive supports in their own home, support workers will operate in unsupervised and less controlled work environments.

Managers will need to develop new skills and promote values and a culture that supports the principles and objectives of the NDIS. They will also need skills to manage funding differently and manage more intense matching and rostering demands (Workability Qld 2017b). In research undertaken by Workability Qld, stakeholders also identified the unique needs of the new ‘support coordination’ role and noted that this role could also play a part in engaging and supporting Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse participants (Workability Qld 2017b).

The research identifies three main skill needs for the disability workforce:

1. The skills needed to provide support according to NDIS principles (e.g. strong interpersonal skills; the ability to take a person-centred, strengths-based approach; the ability to support participation and inclusion; flexibility and innovation; problem-solving skills; and cultural competence)
2. The skills needed to work effectively in a changed environment (including personal accountability and awareness, career management skills and business skills, with business skills especially important for managers and sole traders) and
3. New knowledge requirements specific to the NDIS including social insurance concepts and principles (Workability Qld 2017a and 2017b).

Moving beyond skills alone, the NDIS Work Context, Skills and Attributes framework sets out the key requirements for performing effectively as an NDIS worker. The framework (included in Attachment B) identifies the importance of establishing the best work context and having the right personal attributes, in addition to having the core skills needed for the job, including both generic and specific skills (Workability Qld 2017c).

Skills IQ reports that the top five skills identified as being needed in the next three to five years by direct client care industry are customer service, communication, technology, leadership (at the organisation level) and flexibility (Skills IQ 2017). Technology skills encompass both working with assistive technologies that may be needed by participants, as well as more generic technology platforms that employers might use such as booking, matching and rostering systems (Skills IQ 2017).

The literature overwhelmingly notes the importance of professional supervision and reflective practice, both during training and in ongoing practice. However, the literature also notes the limitations of the NDIS pricing model in this regard.

## **The suitability of qualifications**

We found two reports discussed the suitability of disability qualifications and training products.<sup>2</sup>

In Queensland, Workability Qld conducted a training products stocktake to assess the suitability and availability of products to address the requirements in the NDIS Work Context, Skills and Attributes framework (Workability Qld 2017c).

The stocktake found that while there are several options to build skills about the NDIS and person-centred, user-led approaches, less is available on cultural competence within the NDIS and reflective practice. The author also found that some products are time-limited, funded as part of provider readiness initiatives and were due to

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<sup>2</sup> Although not included in the literature review due to its very technical focus, there is also a report of the findings of a review of selected qualifications by the Victorian NDIS Direct Support Work Sector Advisory Group, released by Victorian Skills Commissioner in July 2017. This work will be used to help inform discussions on training products later in the project.

expire in 2018, particularly those covering cultural competence. Clearly, time limited products will not enable development of a growing workforce over time.

Additionally, the author emphasised the importance of the training delivery, hearing from stakeholders that the quality of delivery of accredited units is highly variable across RTOs, and that participants and their families don't always value those qualifications in workers.

In Victoria, the Future Social Service Institute is co-designing five new curriculum areas for the Certificate III in Individual Support (specialising in Disability and Ageing). The project was launched in November 2018 and is funded through the Victorian Government Workforce Training Innovation Fund. The new curricula are being mapped to the modules of ethics of care, human rights-led practice, cross-sectoral resources for working with diverse people, enabling technologies and power and abuse (Future Social Service Institute 2018). A key finding of the research to date is that the current curriculum is insufficient to meet the needs of workers operating in a complex environment.

*“Across the board people said the curriculum was too narrowly focused, too technocratic and didn't provide students the broad knowledge to succeed and build career pathways...There were broad areas of knowledge missing that would help people make complex judgements out in the field. The qualifications assumed the work was technical and narrow-focused, when our research showed it was complex, and required people to make difficult judgements in a range of contexts.” (Future Social Service Institute 2018)*

## **Do qualifications matter?**

On the one hand, the NDIS trial site evaluations show that participants and service providers both hold the view that support workers' skills and qualifications are secondary to personal attributes, though still important in many situations (Workability Qld 2017a). There is some research to support this view: Chenoweth and Ward found that training is not a reliable predictor of a worker's suitability for disability support work, and that a respectful attitude, shared values and respect for the service-user are more reliable indicators (cited in Workability Qld 2017a).

However, there is a risk that skilling workers to meet individual participants' needs and priorities may not serve the wider imperative to build a professionalised care workforce with transferable skills. Further, there is some concern that the shift to a consumer directed model could result in a bifurcation of the workforce, with trained and regulated workers employed by agencies and service provider organisations and less qualified, unregulated workers employed directly by consumers (Skills IQ 2017). While this is a legitimate risk and concern, we don't yet know what is actually happening in practice.

Regardless of individual preferences, and notwithstanding the importance of personal attributes, there is evidence from both Australia and internationally, from the disability support sector and from other human service industries, that high quality support services are dependent on high quality employment standards and training for those who provide those services (Ryan and Standford 2018). When it comes into effect in Queensland in 2019, the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework may increase the priority accorded to skilling workers (Jobs Queensland 2018).

## **Participants from Indigenous and CALD communities**

We must do better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

Across the board, the literature emphasises the importance of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations making culturally safe practice a priority (NDS 2018a).

If the NDIS is to benefit all people with disabilities, then building a culturally capable workforce and skilling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers is essential. Indigenous people are reported to have twice the rate of disability as their non-Indigenous counterparts, yet their disability service participation rates are under-representative, potentially due in part to a reluctance to access government services due to mistrust arising from historical experiences (Gilroy et. al. 2017).

Achieving this in rural and remote communities presents additional challenges, where markets are thin, Indigenous people make up proportionally more of the population than in urban settings, community resources may be scarce and where there may be a more transient client group (Gilroy et. al. 2017). Additional barriers may need to be considered including addressing material poverty, which is not within the remit of the NDIS funding model (NDS 2018a).

Understanding recommendations from the literature also requires understanding some of the terminology that is often used but not always fully explained. Terms used include cultural awareness, cultural safety and cultural security. These can be plotted on a continuum ranging from changed knowledge at one end through to changed organisational policies and worker practice at the other.

- Cultural awareness provides workers with knowledge about Indigenous history and culture but this doesn't necessarily result in changed behaviour or practice
- Cultural safety describes ways that workers might approach relationships when working with an Indigenous client, to provide a safe environment
- Cultural security entails translating culturally safe practice into organisational policy, procedures and worker skill requirements (Gooda 2017).

Gilroy et. al. reviewed the international and Australian literature and proposed three strategies to skill the disability workforce to meet the needs of Indigenous participants living in regional and remote locations:

1. Adopting **community-centred and community development approaches** to facilitate community ownership of programs and allow communities to set priorities and strategies to address them. Building on existing resources within communities is also key, for example providing entry-level training and recruitment to build a local workforce and skill the informal workforce already supporting people with a disability. Building the community development skills of non-Indigenous service providers is also recommended to assist them to take community-centred approaches and transfer skills to the community. The authors highlight the importance of understanding what communities want and not assuming, for example that all Indigenous people wish to access community-controlled services.
2. **Cultural training** for non-Indigenous workers, emphasising the shift from cultural awareness to more active approaches such as cultural security, with parallel efforts at the organisational policy and practice level.
3. Developing an Indigenous disability workforce via three approaches:
  - a. a promotion strategy to position the disability services sector as an employer of choice,
  - b. localised recruitment strategies including Indigenous employee targets, identified positions and cultural selection criteria, and training programs that lead to a direct employment outcome, and
  - c. retention strategies including Indigenous staff networks, support and mentoring to help staff balance responsibilities and not become burnt out from being the 'Indigenous expert' in addition to career development strategies and flexible training and development opportunities for staff living in regional or remote locations.

In light of the reportedly tight margins for service providers operating in the NDIS space, it's difficult to envisage many organisations adopting such a comprehensive suite of strategies. We anticipate a leadership and supporting role may be needed within the sector to drive this kind of change.

## **Such strategies may also be relevant to CALD communities**

Some of these approaches described above are similar to recommended strategies to engage people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the NDIS, which in turn have implications for workforce development and skilling. While people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have similar rates of disability as those who are Australian-born, their uptake of disability supports has historically been lower, and this has been replicated in uptake of NDIS supports (Heneker et. al. 2017).

Research conducted by Flinders University for AnglicareSA identified the following factors as having an impact on uptake of supports: lack of familiarity with Western health care systems, stigma associated with disability and expectations in collectivist cultures about the role of family versus individual supports (Heneker et. al. 2017). Additional barriers include not being fluent in English and limited capacity for planning, purchasing services and self-advocacy.

Recommended approaches to increase uptake of supports include building rapport and trust with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, raising awareness of disability and available supports, and embedding cultural competence in organisational policies and practices (Heneker et. al. 2017). Of particular note is the importance of building rapport and trust over time, which is linked to the issue of staff retention and applies to service providers working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As the manager of the NPY Women's Council in the Northern Territory noted:

*"We've invested heavily in trying to maintain our existing staff. And that's important, because working in Aboriginal communities, the work you do is based on having trusting relationships with clients and families. Those relationships take a long time to build. We want those staff members to stay here and continue those relationships"*

*(NDS 2018a, p48).*

## **There are promising new approaches**

The literature identifies recommended approaches to training and workforce development, along with some specific initiatives that the project will continue to monitor.

### Recommended approaches to training and workforce development

Recommended approaches for successful NDIS worker training and workforce development include:

- A focus on values and mindsets (challenging workers to examine their own values and assumptions)
- Providing mentoring, supervision and collaboration (follow-up and reflection after training, booster sessions, professional supervision and building a community of practice)
- Learning in partnership (training for people with disability and staff and families together)
- Wide and varied learning opportunities given the varied needs of people with disability, and access to specific training e.g. mental health, medication management and cater to different learning and delivery methods
- Accommodating a preference for face to face training with time for space and reflection (Workability Qld 2017b).

### Victorian Initiatives

Victoria's NDIS workforce plan highlights that jurisdiction's priorities and includes funding of \$26m for:

- research including the new Future Social Service Institute noted above
- regional coordinators to drive place-based responses to workforce issues,
- information and training to support the existing workforce transition to the NDIS,
- reviewing relevant training package qualifications, understanding and developing learning opportunities to meet the professional development needs of VET trainers and provide work placements for students
- promoting best practice for staff working with people with high and complex needs, and
- increasing allied health capacity and capability and use of allied health assistants and promoting the sector.

Another Victorian development is the introduction of a workforce licensing system linked to accredited disability qualifications which meet registration requirements. The scheme uses two mechanisms:

- Positive licensing (registration) by protecting the use of titles that can only be used by workers who have met certain standards of practice and
- Negative licensing (code of conduct) by setting a minimum level of conduct expected of unregistered workers, with the power to prevent workers from delivering services if they present a serious risk to health and safety (Victorian Government 2018a).

The scheme aims to balance safety, quality and user choice and control. Participants can choose to employ unregistered workers, but nonetheless enjoy safeguards through a minimum level of conduct required of all workers, whether registered or not. The scheme explicitly links to qualifications, with varying registration options for different qualifications and a publicly available register of qualified workers, reducing the need for pre-employment checks by employers (Victorian Government 2018b).

### Case Studies

Two case studies showcased by National Disability Services may also have relevance for our research. A Western Australian partnership between a provider and LaTrobe University aims to improve staff capability in providing person-centred, active support. A Queensland initiative, Community Solutions Subsidiary (Endeavour Foundation) uses a shared labour pool, different funded employment services and seeks to provide one stop shop services for providers and employers. The case study cites cost savings to employers and strong employment outcomes (NDS 2018a).

### A national training and development fund

Finally, we note a proposal put forward by Ryan and Stanford to establish a national training and professional development fund for the disability sector that's not tied to NDIS participant plans nor employer type.

The proposed fund would be jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State levels of government, consistent with the current NDIS cost-sharing model. The model would benefit workers regardless of whether they move employer or operate as sole traders, and recognises the low-paid, highly casualised and part-time nature of disability support work. The development of qualifications and career pathways is an essential component of the proposal.

The fund would be used to enable induction training for new recruits to be completed within six months of commencement, a Certificate III to be completed within 18 months of commencement, and a portable training entitlement based on hours worked (1 hour paid training credit for every 50 NDIS-compensated hours worked), which workers could use to choose subsequent nationally recognised training and support career pathways and development. In parallel with this approach for individual workers, the authors propose establishing corresponding vocational qualification pathways that extend beyond Certificate IV into specialist Diploma, Advanced Diploma, and University-level qualifications and graduated pay scales to recognise workers' accumulating qualifications.

*Conclusions and issues for further exploration*

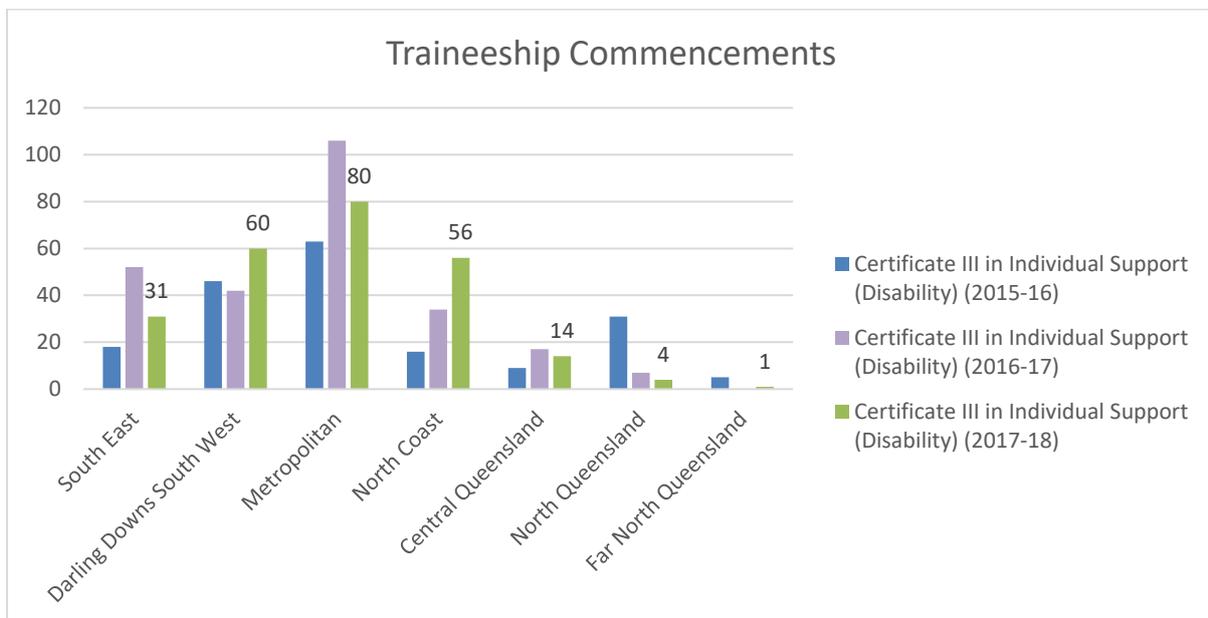
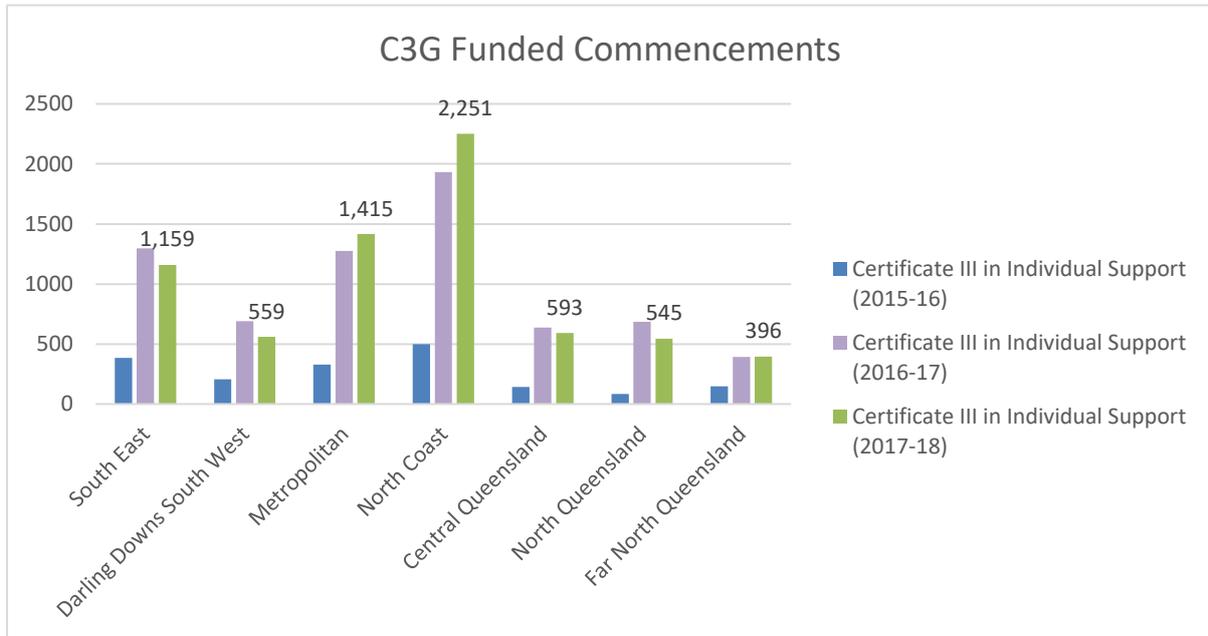
13. The literature highlights a number of issues to test further in consultations:
  - the role that training plays in recruitment and retention in the disability sector
  - the extent to which identified skill needs for the sector are being addressed in training products (including the need for cultural competence when working with particular communities)
  - whether NDIS pricing is still impacting upon opportunities for training and supervision
  - whether bifurcation of the workforce is occurring between those that are qualified and regulated and those who aren't and where they are employed, and whether this creates a risk for the sector.
14. The disability support workforce needs of Indigenous, CALD and rural/remote communities require particular investigation so that recommendations can be made about how training and development can better support these.
15. The project will continue to monitor a number of identified initiatives to identify lessons for this research.

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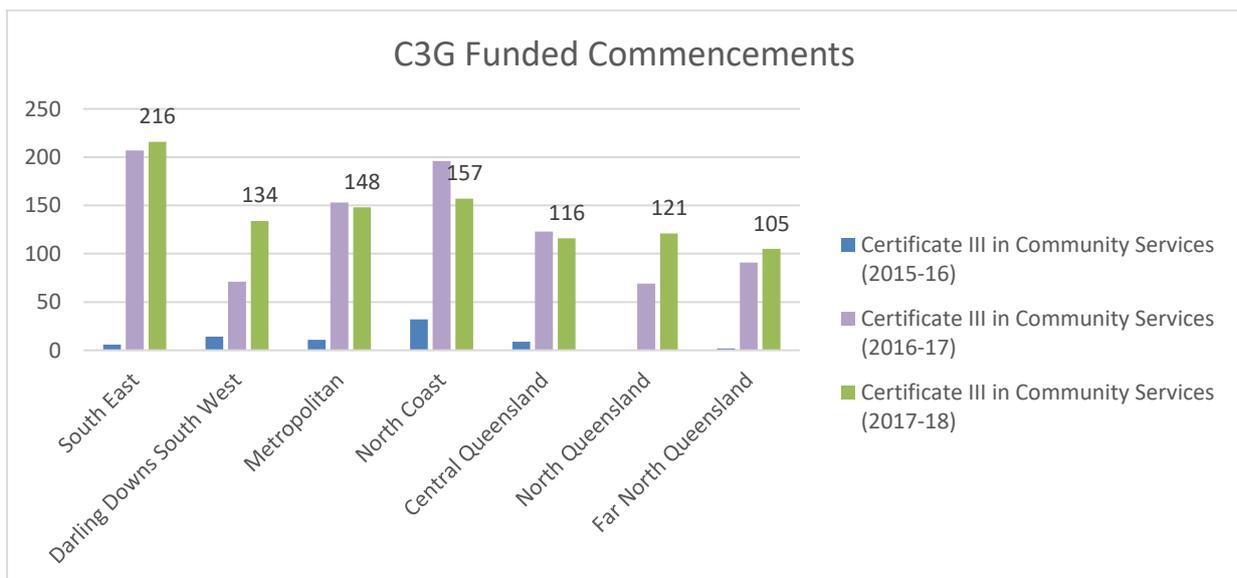
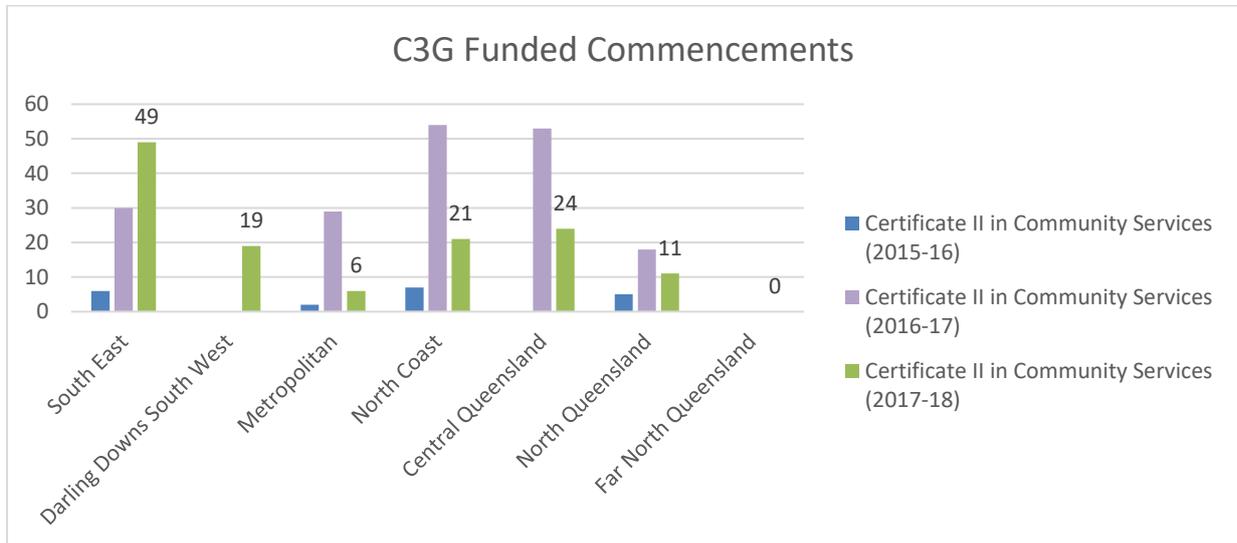
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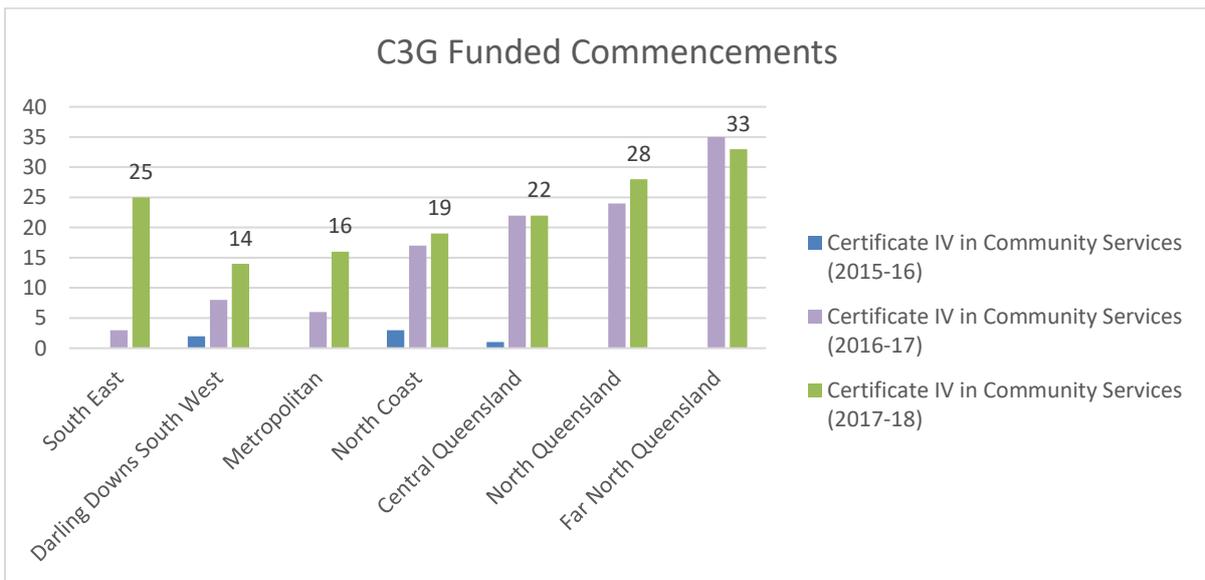
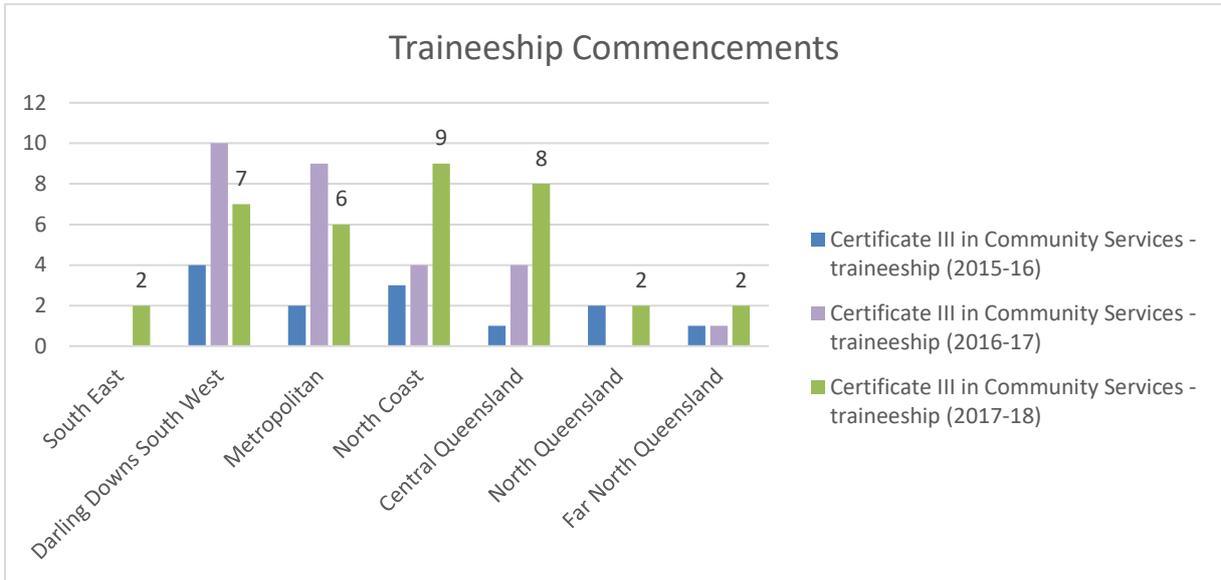
## Attachment A – DESBT funded training commencements in selected qualifications

### Individual Support Qualification Commencements by Region

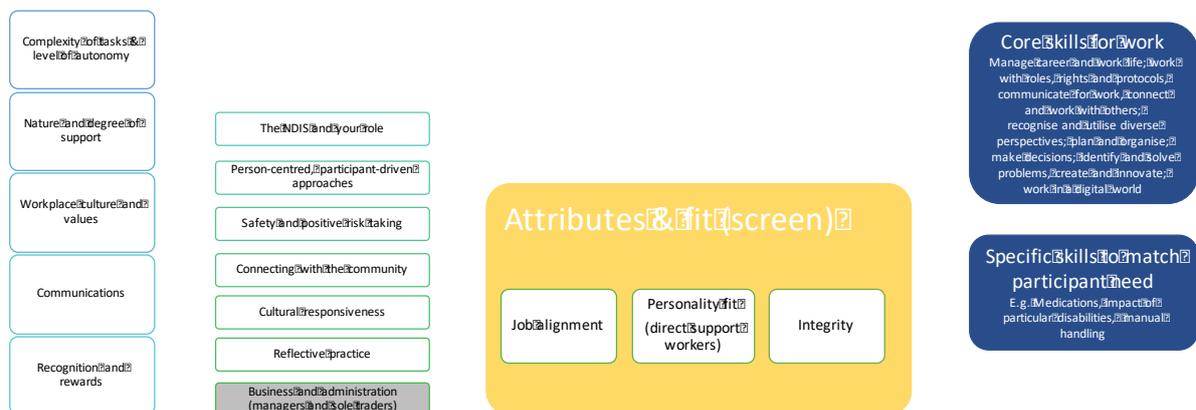


## Community Services Qualification Commencements by Region





## Attachment B. Framework for Skill Development in the Disability Sector



Source: (Workability 2017c) Workability Queensland: NDIS Training Requirements and Products Report 2: Training products stocktake