

# Building workforce planning capability in the NSW Health system

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## Discussion Paper – August 2018

This discussion paper invites feedback to seven focus questions that will support building workforce planning capability in the NSW Health system.

You will find the questions throughout the discussion paper. These questions will ask you to consider the different components of the discussion paper and add any relevant information based on your experience.

Your feedback will be captured in a survey, which can be found here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DiscussionPaper>. The survey will be open until Wednesday 12 September.

It is anticipated that feedback from the discussion paper will:

- inform the development of new refreshed ten year goals for the [Health Professionals Workforce Plan 2012-2022](#), in particular strategy 2.1 'integrated and comprehensive workforce planning'
- contribute to deliverables under strategy four of the *NSW Health Strategic Priorities 2018-2019*, including the aim to 'build capability in workforce planning at the District level' and 'drive stronger alignment of workforce planning with service and infrastructure planning'
- support the development of a state-wide action plan to build workforce planning capability in NSW Health.

## Introduction

Workforce planning is a foundational element in ensuring that NSW Health trains, recruits and retains a fit for purpose workforce and is, in turn, able to effectively address the workforce needs of the system. In the past five years, there has been considerable emphasis on stabilising the foundations of workforce planning across NSW Health through improving data quality and access, bringing together a network of workforce planners and strengthening links with service planning. NSW Health is now at a point where it can collaboratively work on an approach targeted at building workforce planning capability across the system.

The *NSW Health Strategic Priorities 2018-19* aim to 'build capability in workforce planning at the District level' and 'drive stronger alignment of workforce planning with service and infrastructure planning'. This is in line with the *NSW Health Professionals Workforce Plan 2012-2022*, which outlines how NSW Health will address the current and future challenges facing the workforce.

The 2018 refresh of the *NSW Health Professionals Workforce Plan 2012-2022* provides an opportunity to refine and develop more specific ten year goals for each Strategy. Feedback from this discussion paper will inform the development of ten year goals for strategies under Stabilising the Foundations and in particular strategy 2.1 "*Integrate workforce planning with local service and facility planning.*" It will also contribute to the *NSW Health Strategic Priorities 2018-19*. To meet these goals, further development of workforce planning capability and capacity in the Health Agencies<sup>1</sup> is required.

The discussion paper starts by defining workforce planning and outlining why it is important for NSW Health. It then looks at what has been accomplished to date, and the lessons learnt about challenges and opportunities for workforce planning in NSW Health. This discussion paper poses seven questions to invite feedback on the concepts of workforce planning, challenges and/or opportunities for workforce planning, and the desired future state in NSW Health. Feedback from this discussion is intended to contribute to developing a state-wide approach and a draft action plan to improving workforce planning capability and capacity in NSW Health.

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<sup>1</sup> NSW 'Health Agencies' in this context include Local Health Districts and Specialty Networks, pillar organisations and specialist health services.

## Who is the audience?

The implementation of the final action plan will be a collaborative effort. The Ministry will monitor progress and provide advice and support where needed. To ensure the development of a fit for purpose approach we are seeking input from all key Health Agency workforce planning stakeholders. This includes: Workforce Planners, Directors of Workforce, Aboriginal Workforce, Nursing and Midwifery, Medical Services, Allied Health, and others involved in workforce planning at the Local Health District and Specialty Network (LHDN) level. Feedback would also be welcomed from Service Planners, Health Infrastructure, eHealth, HealthShare, and other agencies whose work requires integration and collaboration with workforce planning to ensure success.

## What is workforce planning?

Workforce planning is defined by the Australian Public Service Commission (2011) as “a process of identifying the workforce capacity and capability [an] organisation needs to meet its objectives, now and into the future.” This includes not only identifying the number of health professionals required, but an assessment of the roles, skills and competencies that the health system will require to meet future needs. Consideration of skill-mix, models of care, consumer demands and education and training pathways also form an integral part of this process.

Workforce planning is an iterative and continuous process involving many different components and stakeholders. The planning process can be broken up into several distinct stages as per Figure 1. However, it is important to note that there are many factors that influence workforce planning and the different stages do not always necessarily follow a linear process. Workforce planning should be integrated into other planning processes (service, facility development, financial etc.) in a timely and consistent manner to ensure a strategic and comprehensive picture of current and future workforce requirements.



Figure 1: The workforce planning process (CIPD, 2018)

NSW Health undertakes workforce planning across three levels; strategic, tactical and operational. While there is an overlap between the activities on each level, they can be defined as below.

Strategic Workforce Planning is matching long term workforce requirements to long term service demand. Typically, strategic planning looks at five years and beyond. The Ministry drives the majority of this work with support, input and feedback from the Health Agencies. The *Health Professionals Workforce Plan 2012-2022* is the key strategic document which underpins the NSW Health workforce vision of 'right people, right skills, right place.' Most state-wide work to date has been driven by the strategies identified in this plan. Examples of this include key workforce management documents such as the *Good Health – Great Jobs: Aboriginal Workforce Strategic Framework 2016-2020*, the *NSW Health Analytics Framework*, and the development of the *Mental Health Workforce Plan* which help support the overall vision of the Plan.

Tactical Workforce Planning identifies what various parts of an organisation need to do to align local workforce to clinical services. It is typically focused on a shorter time frame of one to three years. This involves close collaboration between the Ministry and Health Agencies to build and maintain fit for purpose tools and resources that support the strategic priorities. The high number of redevelopments currently underway or planned in NSW provides additional challenges to workforce planning at a local level. Although some work has commenced in this space, there are opportunities to grow the Ministry's support for tactical workforce planning through increased collaboration with Health Agencies.

Operational Workforce Planning is applying strategic and tactical requirements in a local context. It generally involves outlining specific milestones, actions, conditions for success and timeframes. This area of planning is led by the LHDNs. The Ministry and Pillars have a role in enabling LHDNs with the tools and capabilities to develop their workforce planning capabilities and processes. The system has identified that there is more work that can be done to support local capability and capacity to help improve and streamline operational workforce planning.

Workforce planning in NSW Health should be conducted as a continuous process and aligned with strategic business planning. However, there are situations that may require additional workforce planning activities. Facility developments are one example of this. Workforce plans for facility developments are important, as they identify the specific workforce requirements for a new or redeveloped facility. It is critical that such workforce planning activities are informed by and integrated with the continuous workforce planning done by the Health Agency as well as with capital and service planning.

**For discussion:**

1. Are there any aspects of your workforce planning experience that do not resonate with this definition? Please explain.

## Why is workforce planning important?

Workforce planning is a foundational element impacting on the *Health Professionals Workforce Plan 2012-2022* vision of ‘right people, right skills, right place.’ The strategies in the plan are future focused and support the growth of a skilled and capable workforce in NSW Health. Workforce planning helps to align the strategic priorities of the plan to health service and workforce needs in NSW.

Understanding our staffing needs now and in the future and implementing strategies to proactively build the pipeline for future needs ensures we have the workforce we need to deliver safe and quality patient care. Integrated and comprehensive workforce planning strategies enable us to better understand and address new and changing workforce requirements at state and local levels.

### Integration with workforce management

Workforce planning forms a key part of the broader workforce management picture. It is intrinsically tied to recruitment and retention in LHDNs. It shapes, influences and is influenced by workforce management activities such as:

- Good rostering practices
- Data collection and analytics
- Modelling and forecasting
- Talent and succession planning
- Budgeting
- Recruitment and retention strategies
- Workplace culture
- Employee wellbeing and support
- Education and training
- Performance management.

Successful workforce management integrates workforce planning with strategies, information, systems and local processes. Effective workforce management enables early detection and problem solving of potential workforce challenges and issues. It also provides a more accurate picture of current and future demand and needs, to allow for more efficient workforce management strategies. There are many advantages to an effective workforce management approach. It may, for example, increase operational productivity, reduce unnecessary expenses, improve patient satisfaction and staff wellbeing, and ensure the health service is able to consistently meet workforce requirements.

Effective workforce planning is linked to improved costs, quality and efficiency (Hudson 2018). The recruitment process can be more efficient and less costly if staffing needs are understood in advance. Employee engagement and retention is enhanced by effective talent management which leads to quality and efficiency. A strategic approach that places the right people in the right roles ensures the workforce is positioned to strategically deliver business outcomes (Hudson 2018).

### External influences on the health workforce

Workforce planning is conducted in a complex environment which must consider numerous external factors including policy and legislative changes, demographic trends, socio-economic changes, new and emerging technologies, and environmental factors. The current environment presents specific challenges for planning, such as an ageing population and workforce, challenges attracting and retaining staff in rural areas, changes to the health landscape including advances in treatment, technology and new models of care, and an increasing and changing demand for services. All these factors contribute to a highly complex environment.

A number of challenges in the current environment have strengthened the need for proactive and comprehensive future planning. An example is the growing numbers of facility developments in NSW Health, which has increased the need for an appropriately skilled workforce planned workforce. As at April 2018 Health Infrastructure had listed 151 capital projects on their website. This places additional pressure on workforce planners and has accelerated the amount of work in this area.

Without comprehensive planning processes in place, the system may not be able to attract and retain the right skill mix in a timely manner. It is therefore critical that considerations are given to these external factors impacting on the local workforce context and that an appropriate analysis is conducted. This should ideally be built into normal workforce planning processes as well as workforce management more broadly. Undertaking an analysis of the external factors will provide senior decision-makers with contextual information about the organisation, the broader health environment, as well as any challenges or risks that may need to be addressed. This information will help to identify disruptive changes to workforce models that may have a significant impact on the future employment landscape (CIPD 2017).

**For discussion:**

2. Based on your experience, do you feel the workforce management description is accurate? Are you aware of any other workforce management activities or enablers?
3. Are there any other challenges or opportunities driving the need for effective workforce planning in your Health Agency? Please explain what and how.

## **What have we done over the past five years?**

The *Health Professionals Workforce Plan 2012-2022* aligns short, medium and long-term workforce needs with strategic, state-wide objectives. Over the past five years, the Plan has driven numerous successes in stabilising the foundations of workforce planning in NSW Health, as well as integrating workforce planning with the broader workforce management agenda. Strategic workforce planning generally follows the approach of gathering workforce intelligence, setting strategic priorities, co-design with key health and education partners, and leading workforce development initiatives.

Across the system, significant work has been done (and is being done) to support workforce planning. Historically, the Ministry's involvement in workforce planning has been primarily at a strategic level. As the 'system manager', the Ministry provides support to the health system, while the LHDNs are responsible for providing health services in a wide range of settings. However, more collaborative work is now being done at tactical and operational levels.

Through collaboration with key stakeholders from across the system, the Ministry has identified a need to become more involved with specific tactical workforce initiatives. This includes additional support for workforce planners as well as providing direction on workforce planning for facility developments. Collaborative work in the tactical space and a common understanding of workforce planning requirements will enable LHDNs to meet their operational workforce requirements. Examples of specific projects to integrate workforce planning with service and facility planning are outlined below.

### **Specific work to integrate workforce planning with service and facility planning**

The Ministry collaboratively reviews clinical service plans, business cases and workforce plans to ensure workforce planning is integrated with local service and facility planning in NSW Health. A guide to developing a Workforce Plan has been developed based on feedback frequently provided on these plans. An initial version of this was distributed to the Health Agencies in April 2018.

Working more closely together with key stakeholders such as Health Infrastructure (HI) and the Health Systems Planning and Investment Branch (HSPI) will also help integrate workforce planning with service and facility planning. A bi-monthly meeting between representatives from HI, Workforce Planning and Development Branch (WPD) and HSPI has been established with meetings to commence in August 2018. This group will monitor the current state of significant redevelopments, identify workforce planning related risks, share information and co-design tools to support the alignment of service planning, workforce planning and infrastructure development.

WPD hosts a quarterly Ministry of Health Workforce Planning Advisory Forum which provides an information and support network for workforce planners across NSW Health. This group provides a forum to communicate relevant information and initiatives regarding workforce planning within the NSW Health system and supports workforce planning state-wide initiatives.

In addition, work has commenced to strengthen workforce planning capability at a state and local level. A half-day workshop was conducted for the Directors of Workforce in February 2018. Evidence gathering on best practice workforce planning, stakeholder interviews and a review of workforce data in a sample LHD have also been undertaken. This work has enhanced our understanding of the current state of workforce planning, identified key challenges and opportunities and has helped us to start building a picture of a desired future state. These projects are intended to form an evidence base for the potential future development of state-wide approaches and resources for workforce planning.

Substantial efforts in the past four years have resulted in developing workforce management systems and enhancing the availability of high quality workforce data. A number of workforce reporting dashboards have been created in the Statewide Management Reporting Service (SMRS) to enable online access to workforce metrics and key performance indicators. Progress has been made on reporting and analytics across the suite of Corporate IT NSW systems and business intelligence, for example Rostering and Human Capital Management. Availability and access to high quality data will support workforce planners to increase their understanding of the current state and make more accurate predictions about the future. An understanding of the requirements and challenges of maintaining data in a health system as large as NSW Health is also important.

## What have we learnt? – Challenges and opportunities

Through these initiatives, the Ministry in collaboration with key stakeholders has identified a number of challenges and opportunities for further work. These areas will guide the development of the objectives for the action plan.

### **Develop a common language for workforce planning**

The workshop that was held with the NSW Health Directors of Workforce in February 2018 identified that there are a range of different definitions and understandings of what constitutes workforce planning across NSW Health. Consultation between WPD and other key stakeholders has also identified that there is a need for a consistent definition of workforce planning. Using a common language, definition and terminology will facilitate further integration and alignment of workforce planning with strategic planning. It was suggested that this would also help to clarify the role and scope of practice for workforce planners.

### **Developing workforce planning capability in NSW Health**

The workforce community has raised the point that there seems to be inconsistency in terms of who is responsible for workforce planning at a local and district level, and what their skills and learning needs are. A key challenge identified at the abovementioned workshop was that the current NSW Health workforce planner workforce consists of individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds with different levels of experience. While they bring a wide variety of skills to the role, they may have variable workforce planning experience. The unique context of workforce planning in NSW Health and the different practices across Health Agencies means that even individuals with a workforce planning background may still need new skills to perform optimally.

There is a need for developing a clearer understanding of the skills, scope of practice, and capabilities required of a workforce planner. Clarifying their role will better enable Health Agencies to recruit to these positions. Providing further learning opportunities, such as workshops, would also allow these individuals to continue to develop their skills.

### **Developing workforce planning capacity at a state-wide level**

There is anecdotal evidence that LHDNs are often competing for the same pool of resources and that workforce planners should be considered a small but critical workforce. A small but critical workforce is defined as a *“workforce which contributes critical and essential elements of a comprehensive health service, and is currently experiencing threats to meet system needs now and into the future”* (NSW Health, 2015). The increasing number of facility developments and capital investments is likely to increase pressure on this workforce into the future.

To drive comprehensive and timely workforce planning across the system it is critical to have access to a workforce planning workforce which is skilled and resourced to meet system needs. Part of the program of work moving forward will utilise the established small but critical workforce methodology to strengthen our understanding of the specific needs of this workforce.

### **Consistent state-wide approach to workforce planning and development**

It has also been identified that a consistent state-wide approach to workforce planning would be beneficial. This is not about developing a one size fits all approach, but about ensuring there are tools and methodologies in place which are adaptable to each local context.



Appropriate tools, resources, data and systems support delivery of high quality workforce planning. As part of the broader workforce management approach, several supporting technologies and data systems have already been developed (i.e. HealthRoster, workforce dashboards etc.). While there are several new systems in the pipeline, there is also an opportunity to look at potential gaps in the tools and resources that are currently available to workforce planners. State-wide tools and resources will provide further consistency in the way workforce planning is conducted across NSW Health. For example, the development of a web portal to host and promote all workforce planning resources and tools may support provision of a central point of access to all tools and resources.

A consistent state-wide approach is also about ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are aware of the workforce planning process, appropriate information is utilised to inform the workforce planning approach, and the right stakeholders are engaged at the right time.

### **Maintain and develop a strong and engaged network of stakeholders**

Involving all relevant stakeholders in the planning process has been identified as an enabling factor for effective health workforce planning (Australian Health Workforce Advisory Committee, 2004). There is an opportunity for workforce planners to become more integrated with broader stakeholder networks – particularly in relation to facility development.

The Ministry has commenced a project to gather intelligence on workforce planning approaches, particularly in relation to effective stakeholder engagement. Further consultation with key stakeholder is planned. It is anticipated that this will support the identification of internal and external stakeholders, as well as promote the importance and value of workforce planning across the system. Supporting stakeholder engagement will encourage early collaboration and proactive workforce planning. However, there will be a need to continue to support workforce planners in this area, until comprehensive stakeholder engagement is integrated in the strategic planning processes.

#### **For discussion:**

4. Do these areas resonate with your understanding of the challenges facing workforce planning?
5. Are there any further opportunities you see that have not been identified here?

### **What does the desired future state look like?**

The 2018 mid-term refresh of the *Health Professionals Workforce Plan 2012-2022* provides an opportunity to further develop the NSW Health approach to workforce planning at a strategic level. The current ten year goals related to workforce planning include that “*All state-wide service plans incorporate comprehensive consideration of workforce drivers*” and “*All LHDNs have comprehensive and up to date service plans that are inclusive of workforce, capital and other constraints.*” The discussion paper will inform the development and/or refinement of the ten year goals.

However, it should be noted that the program of work outlined above also involves the Ministry doing more work with Health Agencies in the tactical space and providing further support to Health Agencies at an operational level. This was welcomed by Health Agency senior executives at the Senior Executive Forum in May 2018. A follow-up discussion and workshop is scheduled at the September 2018 Senior Executive Forum.

The forward program of work will be a collaborative effort with different projects led by a range of stakeholders across the Health Agencies. Work will occur across all levels of workforce planning. It will aim to deliver the following vision for workforce planning over the next five years.

***Vision:***

*Workforce planners across NSW Health are equipped to approach workforce planning in a proactive, collaborative and systematic way to ensure that NSW Health attracts and retains a fit for purpose workforce with the capacity and capabilities to deliver first class, patient-centred care now and into the future.*

**Proactive**, meaning that workforce planning will be done in a timely manner. This is of particular relevance for facility development where workforce planning should commence in line with clinical service planning for a new development.

**Collaborative**, meaning that strong networks exist and collaboration occurs between key stakeholders to ensure integrated and comprehensive workforce planning across the state. This also means that workforce planning should be an ongoing and integral part of health service management activities.

**Systematic**, meaning that there are established and streamlined processes in place to support workforce planning at a local and state-wide level.

Workforce planning should also be aligned with the changing needs of the health system and NSW Health strategic priorities.

The proposed State-wide action plan will actively contribute to success in other areas including:

- Supporting and Developing Our Workforce (*NSW State Health Plan*)
- The integration of workforce planning with local service and facility planning (*NSW Health Professionals Workforce Plan 2012-2022*)
- Achieve a 'Fit for Purpose' workforce for now and the future (*NSW Health Strategic Priorities 2018-19*)
- Improved planning for facility development
- Development opportunities and empowerment for workforce planners
- High staff satisfaction and morale
- Improved quality and efficiency of workforce planning
- Increased organisational efficiency.

**For discussion:**

6. What else would you like to see in the future state?

7. What do you see as key enablers/drivers of this future state for workforce planning?

## How are we going to achieve this?

The next step in achieving the future state outlined above will be an approach targeted at building the capability for workforce planning in NSW Health. WPD will develop a draft action plan to outline the objectives and key initiatives of this approach, based on your feedback.

This is intended as the first stage of a co-design approach to identifying the initiatives and strategies required to deliver the desired future state. The action plan will be populated, adapted and progressed through extensive consultation with key stakeholders in each Health Agency.

### Next Steps:\*

1. Please respond via the survey link (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DiscussionPaper>) with any comments or feedback on this discussion paper
2. A draft action plan based on your feedback will be developed, and workshopped further in focus groups with key stakeholders
3. A final action plan will be distributed for review
4. WPD in collaboration with key stakeholders will progress the implementation of new initiatives identified as a part of the action plan
5. The action plan will be reviewed and evaluated at one, three and five years

*\*Note: consultation that occurs as a part of the Health Professionals Workforce Plan refresh will also inform the development of this approach.*

Please feel free to contact Alice Robinson, Senior Project Officer – Workforce Planning & Development with any questions about this discussion paper or survey.

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