



INCA CONSULTING

**EVALUATION OF THE NSW
HEALTH EDUCATION CENTRE
AGAINST VIOLENCE,
ABORIGINAL QUALIFICATIONS**

Final Report

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Centre for Aboriginal Health
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Rates of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse are high amongst Aboriginal people compared with non-Aboriginal people, although underreporting means the true prevalence remains unknown. This violence has a devastating impact on the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities and is compounded by a lack of access for survivors to culturally appropriate services and supports, entrenched distrust of the justice system, and experience of significant socioeconomic disadvantage and marginalisation as a result of their Aboriginal status.

Family violence within Aboriginal communities needs to be understood as both a cause and effect of social disadvantage and intergenerational trauma.¹ The NSW Ministry of Health (MoH) recognises that any response must involve Aboriginal community members in defining the problem and in identifying pathways forward². The drive towards developing more effective and culturally appropriate responses to family and domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse underscores the continued strength, resilience and capacity of Aboriginal people and communities.

NSW Health has developed three consecutive strategies for addressing family violence in Aboriginal communities. The first, in 2002, established and funded Aboriginal Family Health Workers (AFHWs) to provide individual and family support across NSW. A review of this first strategy identified workforce issues as a key limitation, in particular the shortage of appropriately skilled and trained AFHWs and high levels of burnout amongst Aboriginal workers. The second strategy, from 2011-2016, sought to address these workforce needs by funding the Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) to develop and deliver training programs to assist with implementing the strategy and to meet legislative and interagency responsibilities relating to family violence.

ECAV has operated for more than 30 years as a state-wide unit responsible for workforce development in the specialist areas of prevention and response to violence, abuse and neglect, including specific focus on Aboriginal and Cultural and Linguistically Diverse communities. ECAV provides training, consultancy, clinical supervision and resource development for NSW Health and other government and non-government organisations. In 2011 ECAV introduced a one-year *Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling*. The course was designed to follow on from the *Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault &*

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2018) *Family, sexual and domestic Violence in Australia*, 2018. Cat. no. FDV 2. Canberra: AIHW, p. 85.

² NSW Ministry of Health (2016) *Evaluation of the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence, Aboriginal Qualifications, Evaluation Framework*, MoH December 2016 (unpublished).



Child Protection [91314NSW]³), the base level training for Aboriginal Family Health Workers (AFHWs⁴) funded under the NSW Aboriginal Family Health Strategy. ECAV extended its offering for Aboriginal workers in 2013 by introducing a *Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)*, developed and delivered in partnership with the University of Sydney. This addition completed what is known as the ECAV Aboriginal Qualification Pathway, a three-tiered training pathway for Aboriginal workers in the areas of family violence, sexual assault and child protection.

In March 2017 the MoH commissioned an evaluation of the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate (the Certificate IV had previously been evaluated in 2010). The evaluation was tasked to:

- Examine whether the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) are meeting their intended objectives.
- Describe how these qualifications are delivered and monitored, and identify related implementation barriers and enablers.
- Assess the reach of these qualifications and their impact on building the capacity of Aboriginal health staff to respond effectively and in a culturally competent way to family violence, abuse and neglect in Aboriginal communities.
- Identify ways to improve the training of Aboriginal health staff in NSW in responding to family violence effectively and in a culturally competent way.
- Describe the costs of implementing the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma).

Methods

A mixed methods approach was used to evaluate the courses, including a review of documentation, analysis of routinely collected course and financial data, and interviews with past course participants, course delivery staff, workplace managers, MoH staff and external stakeholders.

Key findings

Overall, both courses were found to be very well regarded and delivering on their objectives.

³ This course is now the *Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Wellbeing and Violence Prevention Work* (10619NAT)

⁴ AFHWs are now known as Aboriginal Family Wellbeing & Violence Prevention Workers (AFWVPWs). In this report however they are referred to as AFHWs.



Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling

Course description

The six-module Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling aims to develop specialist counselling skills within an Aboriginal Healing Framework to respond to Aboriginal individuals, families and communities affected by a history of trauma such as adult and child sexual assault, family violence and child abuse and neglect. It has been delivered by ECAV seven times in seven years at its main site in Parramatta, Sydney.

Participation and completion

There have been 69 Aboriginal participants over seven years. Of these 52 people (76%) have graduated with the Advanced Diploma. Participant cohorts have ranged from six to 14 participants each year. 79% of females (46 people) and 55% of males (six people) graduated. A further 10 females (17%) and four males (36%) received a Statement of Attainment.

The participant profile is largely female, over 40 years of age, employed in a health service and reside equally in Sydney and in regional areas. Fourteen participants (20%) and 12 graduates (23%) were AFHWs. Approximately one-third of participants (32%, 22 people) were employed by NSW Health

Accreditation and recognition

The course has been accredited twice by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) (in 2010 and 2017), by the NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board and the Australian Counselling Association. It has been recognised for its role in training Aboriginal counsellors in several key reports.

Funding

The course has received non-recurrent funding from the MoH since it was first established in 2010. MoH funding covers just under half (46%) of total implementation costs. Just over half of funds (53%) have been contributed by ECAV using operational funds, and 1% came from participant fees.

The cost per enrolled student was \$40,364 and the cost per graduate was \$53,338. MoH funding equated to \$18,694 per enrolled student, or \$24,524 per graduate.

The annual intake has ranged from six to 14 students, with an average of around 10 per year. The maximum ECAV will enrol is 25 students per year, which if achieved, would bring the average per-enrolled student cost down to \$14, 535.

Stakeholder views

Stakeholders were overwhelmingly positive about the course. Key identified strengths were: the course design to meet specific industry needs; its focus on cultural safety; its close links to the Aboriginal community through the involvement of



ACMAG; its robust and evidence-based approach which is recognised by key industry organisations such as the Australian Counselling Association; the high level of support provided by ECAV staff, the mix of learning approaches; the relevance and rigour of assessments; and the structure of the course into six modules.

Perceived outcomes

Course participants felt that the training had: improved their skills and qualification as a counsellor; improved employment opportunities such as promotion, recognition or change of job; impacted personal lives e.g. self-confidence, self-healing, including a positive 'ripple' effect in relation to education and training within families; benefited organisations e.g. capacity to recruit and retain Aboriginal staff, enhanced cultural competence and increased engagement with Aboriginal families.

Challenges

Key challenges identified included: retaining participants through the challenging, and at times confronting, course; a lack of support from some workplace managers which made it difficult for some students to meet course requirements; the considerable task of managing RTO compliance; difficulties experienced by some participants in obtaining ABSTUDY support; and the impacts of uncertain funding (e.g. staff contract instability, restricted ability to conduct extensive course promotion).

Opportunities for improvement

Opportunities for improvement include: increasing the number of people progressing from Certificate IV to the Advanced Diploma; providing more information to workplace managers about the course and the units of competency; increasing the amount of the course that is delivered by Aboriginal facilitators; delivery of the course in regional areas; and improving access to ABSTUDY.

Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)

Course description

The Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services combines policy, practice and research in the human and community services industry. The program aims to graduate critically reflective and skilled practitioners for the health and community services sector and other fields of practice. The course has been delivered four times over three years jointly by ECAV and the School of Social Work, University of Sydney, at the University of Sydney Camperdown campus. The program was delivered in 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

**Participation and completion**

There have been 29 Aboriginal participants in four intakes. Of these, 25 (87%) have graduated. Participant cohorts have ranged from six to 10 participants each year. Twenty-four participants (83%) have been female and five (17%) have been male.

The participant profile is largely female, over 40 years of age, employed in a health service and from a regional or rural area. Seven participants (24%) were AFHWs and 11 participants (38%) were employed by NSW Health at the time of enrolment.

Funding

The course has received non-recurrent funding from MoH since it was established in 2013, amounting to 46% of course funding. 54% of funding has been contributed by ECAV using operational funds. The University of Sydney is compensated via a scholarship arrangement equating to around \$14,000 per student.

The cost per enrolled participant was \$34,053 and the cost per graduate was \$42,066. MoH funding equated to \$16,349 per enrolled student, or \$20,196 per graduate. The annual intake has ranged from six to 10 each year, however if the annual intake increased to 15, this would bring the average per-enrolled student cost down to \$15,892.

Stakeholder views

Stakeholders highly regarded the course. Key strengths they identified included: the degree of cultural safety provided to participants; the relevance of the course to Aboriginal individuals and communities; the way the course builds on both the skills-focused Certificate IV and Advanced Diploma and overlays the theory behind the practice; the provision of a positive, safe and supported introduction to University; the quality of teaching; the structure of the course into four manageable blocks of study; and the course's location at the University and in Sydney, which encouraged networking and gave participants permission to focus on themselves.

Perceived outcomes

Perceived outcomes, as reported by stakeholders included: the development of sophisticated ways of thinking and understanding family violence; graduates being placed on an equal footing with those with a bachelor's degree; provision of a gateway to postgraduate study; the development of skilled and educated workers with a greater capacity and drive to address family violence in their communities; and again, the 'ripple' effect with families who were inspired to progress their own training and education.

Key challenges identified by stakeholders included: retaining students in the early stages who experience difficulties or a crisis of confidence; striking the right balance between providing support and independent study; some administrative hurdles at the University and with ABSTUDY; and the impact of uncertain funding.

**Opportunities for improvement**

Opportunities for improvement suggested by stakeholders were: improving the orientation experience by bringing students in for O-Week (Orientation Week) to familiarise them with the campus and facilities and to undertake some introductory classes in academic writing and research and study skills; and introducing them to the Koori Centre on campus earlier.

The ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway**Participation and completion**

Since 2001 when the Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault and Child Protection) was introduced, there have been 439 Aboriginal participants in one or more of the Pathway courses. The overall graduation rate across the three courses has been 66%.

The only demographic factor that seems to affect course completion and graduation across the Pathway as a whole is gender. Female candidates (68%) were somewhat more likely than male candidates (50%) to be awarded a full qualification following an attempt at one of the three courses ($p=0.0084$).

There has been a moderate transition up the tiers of the Pathway: around half (56%) of those who graduated from the Certificate IV from 2010 onwards (the first 'feeder' year for the Advanced Diploma) went on to do the Advanced Diploma, and the same proportion went on to do the Graduate Certificate.

Stakeholder views

Stakeholders identified a number of strengths of the Pathway: it differs from other mainstream education and training programs in that it allows participants to learn and develop skills within a culturally safe space; the courses involve Aboriginal people in the design, development and delivery of the training; the courses are closely connected to Aboriginal communities; the model of delivery is flexible, supports different learning requirements and capacities, and accounts for experiences of Aboriginal people with regards to responsibilities to family and community; the courses are trauma-informed; the courses have a high retention rate; there is a high level of employment amongst graduates; the courses are designed to meet industry needs; and the Pathway facilitates a conduit to tertiary education for Aboriginal students who have a very low university participation rate.

Stakeholders expressed the view that ECAV has a strong reputation in the field for delivery of high quality, needs-focused and culturally safe education and training in this space, and the strong links it has developed with Aboriginal communities.



A number of stakeholders also expressed the view that the Pathway has had a transformational impact on some participants' lives, an impact that has also extended to participants' families.

Some stakeholders said that if the Pathway were dismantled, it would result in a significant gap in the training pathway for AFHWs and other Aboriginal people working in the area of family violence, sexual assault and trauma which would make it difficult for the Government to deliver on key priorities and send a negative message to Aboriginal communities.

Conclusions and implications

Are the courses meeting their intended objectives?

The courses are meeting their objectives to fill skill and qualification gaps in and to build the capacity of the Aboriginal Family Health workforce.

How are the qualifications delivered and monitored, and what are the implementation barriers and enablers?

Each course has established monitoring and continuous improvement systems that effectively review and update the programs. Enablers to implementation include the degree of cultural safety provided to students; the quality of teaching; relevance and currency of the courses for the Aboriginal Family Health workforce and communities; the significant level of staff support to promote retention and completion; the high regard the sector has for ECAV training programs and the trust the organisation has developed with the Aboriginal community; and provision of a positive and supported introduction to university or other qualifications. The main barriers to implementation have been systemic barriers (e.g. inconsistent support from workplace managers, instability of funding, difficulties in accessing ABSTUDY) and personal barriers (e.g. fear of failure, personal resource limitations, underdeveloped research and study skills). There is currently no routine follow-up of participants/graduates to track outcomes and career progression although anecdotally ECAV staff are aware of many former participants' progress.



What is the reach of these qualifications and their impact on building the capacity of Aboriginal health staff to respond effectively and in a culturally competent way to family violence, abuse and neglect in Aboriginal communities?

Some 439 Aboriginal participants have undertaken Pathway courses since 2001, of which 291 (66%) have graduated. Since 2010 (the first feeder year for the Advanced Diploma), just over half of Certificate IV graduates (56%) went on to do the Advanced Diploma, and the same proportion of Advanced Diploma graduates went on to do the Graduate Certificate. Between 2011 and 2017, 69 people participated in the Advanced Diploma, of which 52 (76%) graduated. Between 2013-17, 29 people undertook the Graduate Certificate, of which 25 (87%) graduated.

The demographics of the participants in the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate are predominantly female, mid-career and over 40 years of age. Around half of Advanced Diploma participants and two-thirds of Graduate Certificate participants were from regional or rural NSW.

Participants in both courses were drawn fairly equally from NSW Health, ACCHSs and other organisations (NGOs and other government agencies). 32% of Advanced Diploma participants and 38% of Graduate Certificate graduates were employed by NSW Health at the time of enrolment.

There is only one demographic factor that appears to impact on the likelihood that someone will complete and graduate from Pathway courses, and that is gender. While we cannot determine whether males are less likely than females to graduate specifically from the Advanced Diploma or Graduate Certificate (due to small numbers) across the three-tiered Pathway, gender appears to play a role. Some factors that could be considered to better understand this are the appeal the programs currently have for men; whether stronger strategies for retaining men in the courses are required; and the broader demographic of the family and domestic violence workforce, which anecdotally is said to be predominantly female. Apart from gender, no other single demographic factor is a predictor of completion or non-completion; in other words, a person's age, where they live, where they work, or what they do, makes no difference to whether they are likely to complete the programs or Pathway.

How could the training be improved?

Improvements could be made in the area of reach and promotion, promoting better support from workplace managers, improving administration processes and access to financial assistance, and securing funding.

What are the costs of implementing the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)?



MoH funding covers about half of the cost, the remainder coming out of ECAV's operational budget. ECAV subsidises the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate through revenue from other courses offered across all its portfolios. Costs that are not covered by MoH funding include the significant costs associated with RTO compliance, program governance and management, promotion, IT support, administrative support, development of course materials, printing, professional development of trainers, cultural supervision of staff, librarian support and research to ensure the courses reflect best practice.

A key issue is how the courses should be funded in the future. The main options to fund the courses are fee for service, non-recurrent project funding (the current mechanism), recurrent funding, block funding over several years, and co-funding from MoH and other agencies. In order to facilitate improved program planning and to commit to increasing the number of participants through the Pathway, the optimal solution would be to recurrently fund both the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate. Another option, albeit somewhat less desirable from a planning and continuity perspective, would be a commitment from the MoH to block fund the programs over several years. This approach would provide stability for a defined number of years, though of course the level of stability would decrease the closer it got to the funding 'end date'. The issues around WSLHD management of funds for the courses should also be addressed in future funding arrangements. A co-funded model could be an option to work towards in the future, but this would take time for the MoH to negotiate such partnerships at a departmental level.

Implications

Drawing on the findings of this evaluation, the following implications for delivery and resourcing of the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate have been identified:



Reach and promotion

- i. MoH (CAH and PARVAN) should consider making the Advanced Diploma mandatory for AFHWs and encourage graduates to undertake the Graduate Certificate.
- ii. ECAV should strengthen existing efforts to promote the Pathway to all new and prospective Certificate IV participants.
- iii. ECAV and the University of Sydney should explore ways in which to improve recruitment and retention of male participants.
- iv. ECAV should consider options for delivering the Advanced Diploma in regional locations.
- v. MoH should consider engaging in discussions with agencies such as FACS (Community Services and Housing NSW), the Department of Justice (including Corrective Services), NSW Police, the Department of Education (Connected Communities) and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss how the Pathway can be expanded and courses could be promoted to their Aboriginal staff. These negotiations should investigate options for setting up co-funded organisational fee for service funding arrangements.

Monitoring

- vi. ECAV should consider how monitoring of the employment and education outcomes of participants could be routinely undertaken.

Participant support

- vii. ECAV and clinical supervisors should consider strengthening engagement with workplace managers of participants in the Advanced Diploma to discuss support needs.
- viii. ECAV and MoH should consider strengthening promotion to managers of the one-day *Developing culturally safe trauma informed practice in Aboriginal communities* course. .
- ix. ECAV and MoH should identify opportunities to promote support strategies to managers including promoting specialist training
- x. ECAV should progress management of ABSTUDY group applications for the Advanced Diploma

Funding

- xi. It is suggested that the MoH funds the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate in a way that provides greater certainty and enables longer term service planning. Ideally this would be through recurrent funding, although



block funding (over several years) would improve on the present year-to-year project funding arrangement.

- xii. Provision should be made in budget to manage ABSTUDY group applications for the Advanced Diploma.

Further research

- xiii. Further research would be helpful to understand the extent to which the Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway has led to more Aboriginal people accessing family violence services.



LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACA	Australian Counselling Association
ACCHS	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service
ACMAG	Aboriginal Communities Matter Advisory Group
AFHS	Aboriginal Family Health Strategy
AFHW	Aboriginal Family Health Worker
AMIHS	Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Strategy
AQF	Australian Quality Framework
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
ECAV	Education Centre Against Violence
FACS	NSW Department of Family and Community Services
HETI	Health Education and Training Institute
IT	Information technology
LHD	Local Health District
MoH	NSW Ministry of Health
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SOA	Statement of Attainment
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WSLHD	Western Sydney Local Health District



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Prevalence of Aboriginal family and domestic violence

Rates of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse are high amongst Aboriginal people in comparison to non-Aboriginal people, although underreporting⁵ means the true prevalence remains unknown. In 2008, rates of reported victims of domestic violence were six times higher for Aboriginal females than non-Aboriginal females, and four times higher for Aboriginal males than non-Aboriginal males⁶. In 2016, Aboriginal people in NSW were more than twice as likely to be reported as victims of sexual assault as non-Aboriginal people⁷.

This violence has a devastating impact on the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities and is compounded by a lack of access for survivors to culturally appropriate services and supports, entrenched distrust of the justice system, and experience of significant socioeconomic disadvantage and marginalisation as a result of their Aboriginal status.

Family violence within Aboriginal communities needs to be understood as both a cause and effect of social disadvantage and intergenerational trauma⁸ and the NSW Ministry of Health (MoH) recognises that any response must involve Aboriginal community members in defining the problem and in identifying pathways forward⁹. The drive towards developing more effective and culturally appropriate responses to family and domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse underscores the continued strength, resilience and capacity of Aboriginal people and communities.

1.1.2 Aboriginal Family Health Strategies

In 2002, the NSW Department of Health¹⁰ released the *Aboriginal Family Health Strategy*, which represented the Department's first step towards working in partnership with Aboriginal communities to address family violence and sexual assault in Aboriginal communities. A key element in the strategy was the

⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2018) *Family, sexual and domestic Violence in Australia*, 2018. Cat. no. FDV 2. Canberra: AIHW, p. 85.

⁶ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (2010) NSW Health data request on number of Indigenous victims of domestic violence related assault recorded by the NSW Police, NSW Recorded Crime Statistics from July 2006 to June 2009.

⁷ AIHW, op. cit. Data Tables - Figure 7.1.

⁸ Ibid,

⁹ NSW Ministry of Health (2016) *Evaluation of the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence, Aboriginal Qualifications, Evaluation Framework*, MoH December 2016 (unpublished).

¹⁰ Now known as NSW Ministry of Health (MoH).



establishment and funding of Aboriginal Family Health Workers¹¹ (AFHWs) to provide individual and family support activities, including initial crisis support, advocacy and referral¹². A review of the first strategy identified workforce issues as a key limitation, in particular the shortage of appropriately skilled and trained AFHWs and high levels of burnout amongst Aboriginal workers¹³.

In 2010 a revised strategy was developed – the *NSW Aboriginal Family Health Strategy 2011–2016*¹⁴. This strategy set out the Department’s plan to respond to family violence in Aboriginal communities over the following five years. This second strategy condensed the core elements of an integrated approach and comprised four elements:

- Strategic leadership
- Effective service delivery
- Culturally competent workforce
- Strong community capacity.

The priority actions under the new strategy included:

- Establishing AFHW positions in prioritised areas of need
- Training and ongoing professional development
- Culturally competent response training
- Orientation and supervision
- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Peer support
- Clinical supervision
- Implementation of Aboriginal Family Health Service Guidelines.

Implementation actions included continuing “to fund and support the ECAV to develop and implement training programs and resources to assist NSW Health to implement its policies and strategic directions (including this Strategy), and to meet legislative and interagency responsibilities relating to family violence”¹⁵

¹¹ During 2018 the term Aboriginal Family Health Worker (AFHW) was changed to Aboriginal Family Wellbeing & Violence Prevention Worker (AFWVPW). As the research mainly took place when the older term was used, this report uses the term Aboriginal Family Health Worker (AFHW).

¹² NSW Department of Health (2002), *NSW Aboriginal Family Health Strategy*.

¹³ McDonald, J.M, Cunningham, S., Craigie-Huggins, A. (2005), *Aboriginal Family Health Strategy Review*, JM&A, RPR Consulting.

¹⁴ NSW Department of Health (2011) *NSW Health Aboriginal Family Health Strategy*, Centre for Aboriginal Health. Sydney.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.35.



The *Aboriginal Family Wellbeing and Violence Prevention Strategy 2017-2022* is currently under development and will build on the Aboriginal family health framework to support community wellbeing and the promotion of healing and culturally safe service provision to Aboriginal families and communities¹⁶.

1.1.3 ECAV and development of the Aboriginal Family Health Worker Training Qualification Pathway

ECAV has operated for 30 years as a state-wide unit responsible for workforce development in the specialist areas of prevention and response to violence, abuse and neglect, including specific focus on Aboriginal and Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Communities. ECAV provides training, consultancy, clinical supervision and resource development for NSW Health and other government and non-government organisations. It provides a range of training programs across three different portfolios: Aboriginal Programs, Child Protection and Sexual Assault (including Medical and Forensic responses), and Domestic Violence and Cultural Equity.

To address the identified need for more AFHWs to implement the Aboriginal Family Health Policy, the MoH funded ECAV to develop and deliver an accredited one-year *Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault & Child Protection [91314NSW]*¹⁷), which they have delivered since 2001.

In 2011 ECAV added the one-year *Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling* to its programs, followed in 2013 by a *Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)*, developed and delivered in partnership with the University of Sydney.

Under the Aboriginal Programs portfolio, 17 separate courses are now offered by ECAV, which form a three-tiered Qualification Pathway Model for Aboriginal Family Health Workers (Figure 1).

Formal recognition of ECAV's Aboriginal Qualification Pathway was granted by the MoH in July 2015, enabling graduate status under the Senior Health Education Officer Award.

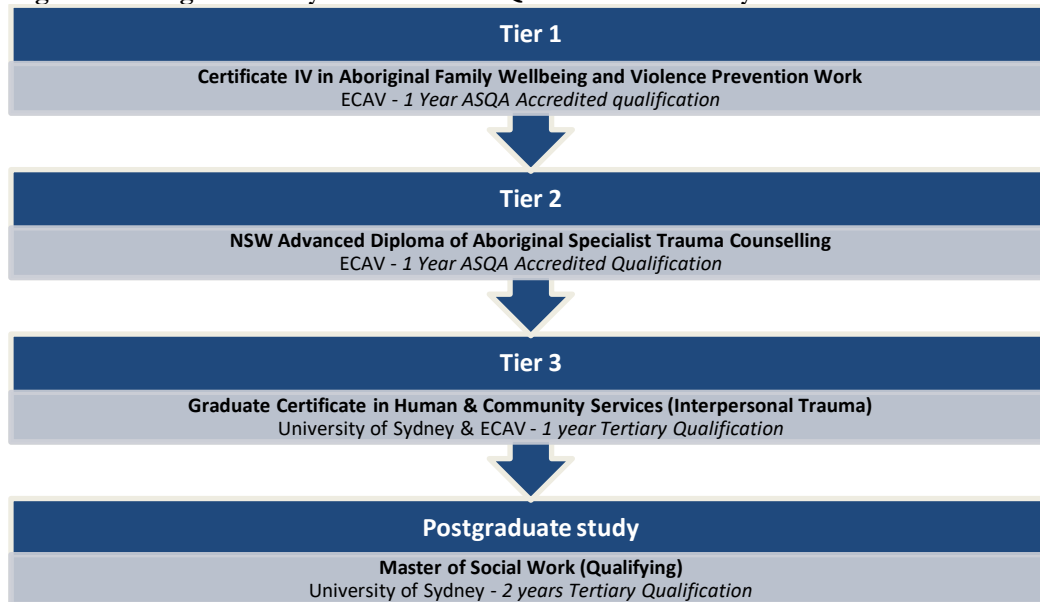
At the time of writing, there were 25 Aboriginal Family Wellbeing & Violence Prevention Workers (referred to in this report by the former name, Aboriginal Family Health Worker

¹⁶ NSW Department of Health (2016) *Aboriginal Family Health Strategy* <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/protection/Pages/ab-family-health-strategy.aspx> accessed on 10/5/17.

¹⁷ This course is now the *Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Wellbeing and Violence Prevention Work* (10619NAT)

or AFHW) positions in NSW, as well as four Aboriginal Family Health Coordinators (AVVVPFSC) and two Local Support Coordinators¹⁸.

Figure 1: Aboriginal Family Health Worker Qualification Pathway Model



Momentum for developing the pathway has grown as the NSW and other governments have recognised the pivotal role of Aboriginal workers in closing the gap in health outcomes and as they increasingly focus on issues of family violence and sexual assault and abuse. The need for the pathway, and ECAV's role in its design and delivery, are underpinned by a number of key initiatives, including:

- *NSW State Health Plan* (NSW Ministry of Health, 2014) which underscores the importance of growing the Aboriginal workforce and enhancing cultural understanding to ensure safe and culturally appropriate healthcare for Aboriginal people¹⁹.
- *NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013 - 2023*. The NSW Government is committed to Closing the Gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal people and continues to support health service reform through the NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013 - 2023. The Plan aims to deliver culturally respectful and responsive services, which better meet the circumstances of Aboriginal people. The Plan, developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, sets the vision and strategic directions for health services in NSW to achieve health equity. The Plan supports the work of the NSW Government's Plan OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment)
- *NSW Health Aboriginal Workforce Strategic Framework 2016 - 2020*. The Framework seeks to support Local Health Districts, Specialty Health Networks and other NSW Health organisations to grow and develop their

¹⁸ Correspondence from Centre for Aboriginal Health 1/3/19.

¹⁹ NSW Ministry of Health (2014) *NSW State Health Plan: Towards 2021*, p. 21.



Aboriginal workforce. It sets out the Aboriginal workforce development priorities and desired outcomes for NSW Health for the period 2016- 2020 and the key actions that to achieve these priorities and outcomes. It builds on the 2011-2015 Framework, which included strategies for increasing Aboriginal workforce capacity and cultural safety in the health system, and developing partnerships between the health and education sectors to “deliver real change for Aboriginal people wanting to enter the health workforce and improve career pathways for existing Aboriginal staff”²⁰.

- *Reparations for the Stolen Generations* (NSW Legislative Council, 2016) which recommended that the NSW Government develops a plan to build a trauma-informed workforce to support Stolen Generation survivors and their families and communities²¹.
- *Responding to Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities* (NSW Ombudsman, 2012) which recommended that ECAV be tasked to develop an Aboriginal recruitment and staff development plan with the specific aim of increasing the number of Aboriginal sexual assault counsellors across NSW²²; and that the strategy be explored that ECAV play an expanded role in developing cultural competency in the NSW public sector workforce, including strategies to develop and mentor Aboriginal staff²³.
- *Stolen Generations Advisory Committee*. Cabinet appointed the Stolen Generations Advisory Committee in May 2017 for an initial period of two years. The role of the Advisory Committee is to advise on and monitor the NSW Government response to Unfinished Business, including reparations and tailored supports to address the impacts of forcible child removal practices. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs appointed NSW Health as Member of the Advisory Committee. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recently released its report, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and Descendants - Numbers, Demographic Characteristics and Selected Outcomes in 2018*. It notes that nationally, between 2002 and 2014 - 2015, descendants consistently had high rates of experiencing stress, discrimination and violence in the previous 12 months.²⁴

1.1.4 ACMAG

The Aboriginal Communities Matter Advisory Group (ACMAG) advises the MoH, ECAV, New Street Services and the NSW Health Aboriginal Family Wellbeing & Violence Prevention Workforce on their programs, ‘with a view to empowering individuals and families and communities, thus building on, strengthening and expanding, the capacities of Aboriginal communities to address and overcome

²⁰ NSW Ministry of Health (2013) *Aboriginal Workforce Strategic Framework 2011-2015*.

²¹ Legislative Council of NSW, General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 (2016) *Reparations for the Stolen Generations in New South Wales: Unfinished Business*, Recommendation 6.

²² NSW Ombudsman (2012) *Responding to Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities: A report under Part 6A of the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993*, Recommendation 27.

²³ Ibid, Recommendation 88.

²⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes*. Cat. no. IHW 195. Canberra: AIHW.



interpersonal violence²⁵. ACMAG meets every two months and plays an important role in overseeing and advising on all ECAV's Aboriginal programs to ensure cultural relevance to Aboriginal individuals and communities.

1.2 Evaluation aims

The MoH commissioned Inca Consulting to undertake an evaluation of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma), as delivered by ECAV, in March 2017.

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

1. Examine whether the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) are meeting their intended objectives.
2. Describe how these qualifications are delivered and monitored, and identify related implementation barriers and enablers.
3. Assess the reach of these qualifications and their impact on building the capacity of Aboriginal health staff to respond effectively and in a culturally competent way to family violence, abuse and neglect in Aboriginal communities.
4. Identify ways to improve the training of Aboriginal health staff in NSW in responding to family violence effectively and in a culturally competent way.
5. Describe the costs of implementing the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma).

1.3 Methods

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach comprising the following components.

1.3.1 Review of documents

A range of documents were reviewed, including:

- Information about each course, e.g. course outlines, application forms, assessment information
- Accreditation documentation and evidence
- NSW Health documents e.g. operational guidelines

²⁵ ACMAG (2016) *Purpose and Terms of Reference*, 7 October 2016, p. 1.



- Submissions and correspondence from/to ECAV
- Student evaluations for the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling (2015 and 2016)
- Previous evaluation reports
- Relevant policy documents.

1.3.2 Analysis of routinely collected course data

De-identified data were provided in Excel spreadsheets via the MoH's password-protected secure file transfer system by ECAV for all participants in the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate, as well as the Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Wellbeing and Violence Prevention Work (formerly Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health [Family Violence, Sexual Assault and Child Protection]). After cleaning (removal of participants who registered but did not commence) the data were analysed by:

- Gender
- Age
- Location (Greater Sydney/regional NSW/interstate)
- Employer (NSW Health/other)
- Position (Aboriginal Family Health Worker/other)
- Year
- Completion status.

It is debatable whether it is appropriate to apply tests of statistical difference to these data. The data relate to the entire population of course candidates between 2001 and 2017 and not a sample of candidates. Tests of statistical difference are generally applied to account for sampling error, which is not a factor with population data. However, if the data set is considered as representative of the future cohort of candidates, it was deemed appropriate to test for statistical difference. The statistical significance of observed differences in the graduation rate of different subgroups was tested using z-tests (proportions), treating subgroups as independent samples. The z-tests were performed using Microsoft Excel.

1.3.3 Analysis of financial data

Four years' worth of financial information relating to the Advanced Diploma and the Graduate Certificate were provided by ECAV. The data included the following line items:

Expenditure:

- Salaries and wages



- Training contract fees
- RTO compliance
- Assessment marking
- Administration/course registration
- Student resources
- Trainers subsistence (travel & accommodation)
- Guest speakers
- Student financial assistance (student sponsorship of travel/accommodation)
- On-costs (rent, IT equipment)
- Course promotion
- Curriculum development
- Catering

Income:

- MoH funding
- Fees received

From the income and expenditure information, costs per-participant and per-graduate were calculated, as well as the contribution made by MoH funding. Percentage of annual expenditure and income were also calculated.

1.3.4 Qualitative interviews with course stakeholders

Qualitative interviews or group discussions were undertaken with 45 people who have a close connection with one or both of the courses. These included:

- Past course participants (n=17)
- Workplace managers (n=4)
- Educators, lecturers, clinical supervisors or ECAV staff (n=7)
- ACMAG members (n=9)
- Other key informants (e.g. MoH, partner organisations) (n=8).

A purposive sampling approach was used to select candidates for interview among the past course participants from 2013 to 2017. ECAV sent a general email to participants and graduates advising them that the evaluation was taking place. Following this, the Inca Consulting research team contacted interview candidates by email and phone, explained the study objectives, sought informed consent and made arrangements with those who wished to participate. An information sheet (Appendix A) was sent to each interviewee and a consent form completed.



A semi-structured discussion guide was developed for each stakeholder group (Appendix B). The discussion questions served to guide the interviews and ensure the key evaluation questions were addressed. The guides went through a rigorous drafting process including input and feedback from the MoH, the Evaluation Advisory Committee, and the Ethics Committees.

Interviews and group discussions were conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. Interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes and group discussions between 60-90 minutes. Before interviews commenced, participants were reminded of their rights and expectations of the interview process – that their participation was voluntary, that they could stop the interview or withdraw consent at any time, that their responses would be treated confidentially and they would remain anonymous in reporting. Where audio recording was agreed to, participants were asked to give written and verbal consent to do this. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed; hand written notes were kept for those interviews where participants did not wish to be audio-recorded or where the technology wasn't available (e.g. interviewing on a mobile phone).

At the conclusion of each interview, participants were thanked and offered a \$30 supermarket gift voucher as a token of appreciation for their contribution.

1.3.5 Ethics and governance

Ethics approval for evaluation was sought and granted from the AH&MRC and the Hunter New England Local Health District Human Research Ethics Committee. Site-specific approvals were obtained for the research from Hunter New England LHD, Western NSW LHD and Western Sydney LHD.

The evaluation was overseen by the ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications Advisory Group which has representation from MoH, LHDs, and NGOs. The project was managed by the Centre for Aboriginal Health with support from the Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, MoH.



2. RESULTS

2.1 Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling

2.1.1 Course description

The six-module Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling aims to develop specialist counselling skills within an Aboriginal Healing Framework to respond to Aboriginal individuals, families and communities affected by a history of trauma such as adult and child sexual assault, family violence and child abuse and neglect.

ECAV developed the Advanced Diploma course in response to:

- Significant interest from Certificate IV graduates in furthering their studies, gaining a counselling qualification and developing a career path. Operational Guidelines limit AFHWs to providing support, referrals and education in communities. Without appropriate qualifications, they cannot provide counselling. However, anecdotally, AFHWs reported that they were having to provide some counselling in their roles, and therefore wanted to develop their skills in counselling and gain the appropriate qualifications.
- Recommendations from the Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce 2006²⁶ and 2008 Wood Inquiry report²⁷ that the number of trained counsellors to respond to Aboriginal child sexual assault experiences be increased.
- Feedback from employers around the need for AFHWs to gain a higher level of specialist skills to support their roles²⁸. The demand for an Advanced Diploma course in counselling was also noted in the 2010 evaluation of the Certificate IV²⁹.

In their advice to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) regarding the need for the course, ECAV identified the following skills gaps they wished to address³⁰:

- Specialist counselling skills to respond appropriately to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities affected by history of

²⁶ Aboriginal Child Sexual Assault Taskforce NSW, Ella-Duncan, M. & NSW Attorney General's Department *Breaking the silence : creating the future : addressing child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities in NSW*.

²⁷ Wood, J (2008) *Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW*, State of NSW, Sydney (recommendations 10.4, 10.5 and 10.6).

²⁸ ECAV (2009) *Notice of intention to develop a course for accreditation*.

²⁹ Pigott, R. & Milward, K. (2011) *Evaluation of Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault and Child Protection)*, for the Centre for Aboriginal Health, NSW Ministry of Health, Sydney.

³⁰ ECAV (2009) *Accreditation Submission*, p. 19.



trauma such as sexual assault, child sexual assault, domestic violence and child neglect and abuse.

- Skills, knowledge and attitude to advocate and ensure the rights and needs of Aboriginal clients are acknowledged and maintained
- Ability to initiate and undertake complex case management for Aboriginal clients affected by interpersonal violence and abuse
- Comprehensive understanding of the medico-legal system to effectively support Aboriginal clients through court processes.

The Advanced Diploma piloted in 2011 with an intake of 14 students and has to date had eight annual intakes.

Structure

Module 1 is prerequisite for the other five modules and focuses on what an Aboriginal Healing Framework is, and introduces key concepts such as *kanyini* (Aboriginal teachings about unconditional love), cultural humility, cultural safety, deep listening, and connectedness. The course then progresses through different aspects of counselling children and adult survivors of sexual abuse, abuse and neglect. Each module includes a mixture of theory, practice and reflection.

The learning outcomes are as follows:

- Demonstrate knowledge and skill in applying principles of an Aboriginal Healing Framework when providing specialist trauma counselling.
- Identify and demonstrate culturally safe practice when providing specialist trauma counselling.
- Demonstrate an ability to engage with culturally safe supervision in order to reflect on personal and professional issues when providing specialist trauma counselling.
- Demonstrate an ability to provide specialist trauma counselling to Aboriginal children and adults who have and/or are experiencing the effects of interpersonal violence.
- Define the culturally safe therapeutic practices that will assist Aboriginal children and adults in healing from the effects of interpersonal violence.

There are 12 ASQA Units of Competency aligned with the six modules (Table 1). Six of the 12 Units of Competency are enterprise units that were developed specifically for the course and are owned by ECAV.



Table 1: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling Modules and ASQA Units of Competency

Module	Units of Competency
1 ADAHF1 Aboriginal Healing Framework	ASTAHF001 Provide specialist counselling skills within an Aboriginal Healing Framework CHCCSL001 Establish and confirm the counselling relationship CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice
2 ADFVSC2 Family Violence Specialist Counselling	CHCCSL005 Apply learning theories in counselling CHCCSL004 Research and apply personality and development theories CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice
3 ADCSASC3 Child Sexual Assault Specialist Counselling	ASTCSA001 Provide specialist counselling to children and young people affected by sexual assault CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice
4 ADCANSC4 Child Abuse and Neglect Specialist Counselling	ASTPAN001 Provide specialist counselling to children and young people affected by abuse and neglect CHCCM002 Implement case management practice CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice
5 ADASASC5 Adult Sexual Assault Specialist Counselling	ASTDFV001 Provide specialist counselling to individuals affected by domestic family violence CHCCSL007 Support counselling clients in decision making processes CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice
6 ADASSC6 Adult Survivors Specialist Counselling	ASTASC001 Provide specialist counselling to adult survivors of child sexual assault ASTASA001 Provide specialist counselling to individuals affected by adult sexual assault CHCPRP003 Reflect on and improve own professional practice



Entry requirements

Participants must:

- be Aboriginal
- have successfully completed the Certificate IV Aboriginal Family Wellbeing and Violence Prevention Work
- have a minimum of 12 months employment as an Aboriginal Family Health Worker or related industry job role (paid or volunteer)
- be over 18 years of age
- be able to complete ADAHF1 before undertaking the other modules
- be willing to undertake the clinical supervision provided by ECAV.

It is recommended that applicants have communication and literacy skills at the standard required for study at Advanced Diploma level.

Delivery

NSW Health Registered Training Organisation (RTO), within the Health Education and Training Institute (HETI), is the auspice organisation for the Advanced Diploma (as well as three other ECAV qualifications). The course is delivered by ECAV staff and contract trainers on site at ECAV's training facility in Parramatta (Sydney).

The course is delivered in block mode over 210 classroom-based hours, broken up into six, five-day blocks over 12 months. A further 290 hours of home and work based self-directed learning and assessment activities and 30 hours of clinical supervision are expected. The delivery schedule of the Advanced Diploma is linked to the delivery schedule for the Certificate IV, in order to capitalise on the availability of trainers, support staff and guest speakers.

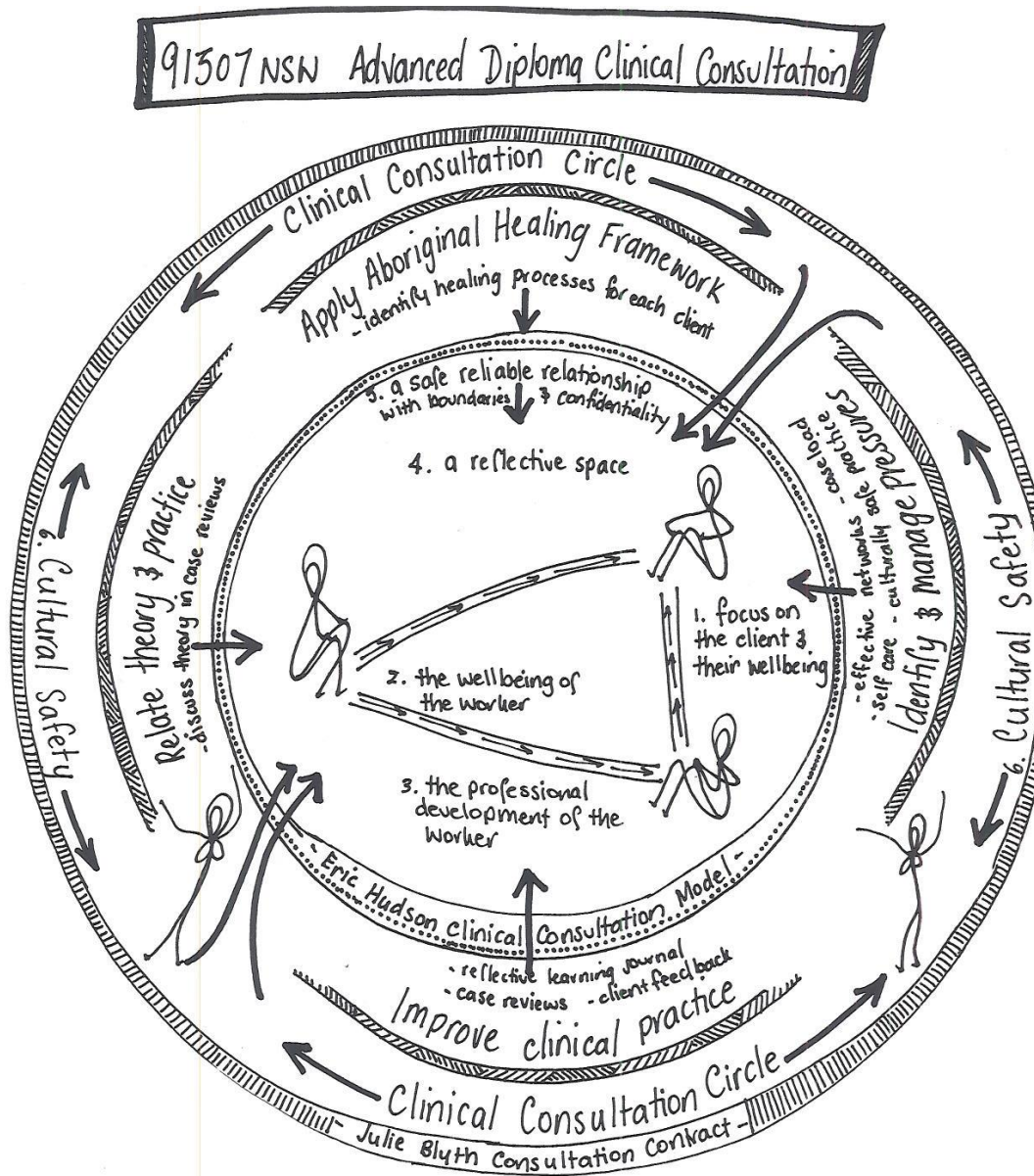
Assessment

Assessments include practical tasks (e.g. role play, group exercises, counselling simulations) and written tasks (eg research papers, essays, case studies, reflective journal). Consistent with ASQA accredited courses (in contrast to theory-based university qualifications), students are required to demonstrate a range of counselling and case management skills in each module.

Assessments are designed to be culturally appropriate and take into consideration participants' possible prior negative experiences in the education system. For example, visual and oral components are included in assessment tasks. Adjustments are possible for students with specific needs such as a disability or first language other than English. This may include allowing more time to complete the task or adapting the task. Assessments are generally due approximately six weeks after the end of each module.

A requirement of the Advanced Diploma is 30 hours of clinical supervision, which may include individual and group supervision. Students are informed that for each module they are expected to participate in five hours of clinical supervision. Two hours are provided within each module as group supervision. At the start of the Advanced Diploma ECAV matches each student with a clinician from its pool of trusted professionals within ECAV's network. Matching includes consideration of factors such as gender, personality, availability and location. A clinical supervision contract between the student and supervisor is completed, which articulates the student's objectives, strategies, timeframe and anticipated outcomes, sets out expectations and articulates the model of cultural and clinical supervision (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Cultural and Clinical Supervision Model





All clinical supervisors – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – must participate in a cultural competence workshop at the start of the year, which focuses on the Aboriginal Healing Framework. Clinical supervisors also receive cultural supervision from an Aboriginal member of staff at ECAV to ensure their supervision of students remains culturally relevant.

Systems for monitoring and continuous improvement

A record of student achievement is kept, including record of attendance and successful completion of assessment tasks. Monitoring systems include the collection of student feedback every module and a meeting between the educators and ECAV management to review the module; oversight by and reporting to ACMAG; and a twice-yearly Professional Development Circle for Aboriginal ECAV staff. The course was reviewed, extensive industry and community consultation was conducted, and it was subsequently accredited by the Australian Counselling Association. It was also reviewed as part of the 2017 ASQA re-accreditation process.

2.1.2 Course achievements

Participation and completion

The following data analysis is based on participation data provided by ECAV for the period 2011 to 2017. Due to the small numbers, caution should be exercised in using the data for anything more than description of participant characteristics. It is not possible, for example, to assign significance to completion rates by characteristics such as gender, age, residence or employer type.

Between 2011 and 2017, 69 people participated in Advanced Diploma courses. Of these, 52 completed the course and received the full qualification (76% full qualification rate). A Statement of Attainment (SOA) was awarded to 14 people (20% partial qualification rate), either because they did not attend all six modules or because they did not otherwise satisfy the requirements of the course. Only three participants commenced the course but received neither a qualification nor a SOA, i.e. they were classified as ‘Did not complete’ (DNC).

The vast majority (84%) of course participants to date have been female. Some 79% of the female participants and 55% of the male participants graduated with a full qualification (Table 2).



Table 2: Completions of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling by Gender, 2011-2017¹

	Males		Females		Persons	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	6	55	46	79	52	76
Statement of Attainment	4	36	10	17	14	20
Did not complete	1	9	2	4	3	4
Total	11 (16%)	100	58 (84%)	100	69 (100%)	100

¹Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence

Participants ranged in age from 23 to 65 years. Around three-quarters of both participants (74%) and graduates (74%) were aged 40 years or older (Table 3).

Table 3: Completions of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling by age, 2011-2017^{1,2}

	<40 years		≥40 years		All ages	
	<i>count</i>	<i>% <40</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>% ≥40</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	14	78	38	74	52	76
Statement of Attainment	4	22	10	20	14	20
Did not complete	0	0	3	6	3	4
Total	18 (26%)	100	51 (74%)	100	69 (100%)	100

¹Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²Age at time of enrolment

About one-third of participants and graduates worked for NSW Health, about one third worked in ACCHSs, and about one third worked elsewhere (NGOs, other government departments or self-employed). A slightly higher proportion of NSW Health (82%) and ACCHS (80%) staff graduated with the full qualification than people working in other organisations (67%) (Table 4).



Table 4: Completions of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling by employer, 2011-2017^{1,2}

	NSW Health		ACCHS		Other		All employers	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	18	82	16	80	18	67	52	76
Statement of Attainment	4	18	3	15	7	26	14	20
Did not complete	0	0	1	5	2	7	3	4
Total	22 (32%)	100	20 (29%)	100	27 (39%)	100	69 (100%)	100

¹Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²Employer at time of enrolment

Fourteen participants (20% of all participants) were employed as AFHWs. A higher proportion of AFHWs (86%) graduated with the full qualification than people in other positions (73%) (Table 5). Five AFHWs were employed in LHDs, while nine were employed in the community controlled health sector. ‘Other’ positions included a range of titles e.g. Aboriginal Family Support Worker, Family/D&A/Sexual Assault Counsellor, Team Leader, PANOC (Physical, Abuse & Neglect of Children) Caseworker, Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer, Family Development Worker, and Educator. Four participants were volunteers attached to either an NGO or an ACCHS.

Table 5: Completions of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling by position, 2011-2017^{1,2}

	AFHW		Other		All positions	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	12	86	40	73	52	76
Statement of Attainment	2	14	12	22	14	20
Did not complete	0	0	3	5	3	4
Total	14 (20%)	100	55 (80%)	100	69 (100%)	100

¹Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²Position at time of enrolment

Just over half of participants (52%) lived in regional or rural NSW, 45% lived in Greater Sydney and 3% were from interstate. The graduation rate was similar for both Sydney (78%) and regional/rural (72%) participants (Table 6).

**Table 6: Completions of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling by region of employment, 2011-2017^{1,2}**

	Greater Sydney		Regional or rural NSW		Interstate		All	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	24	78	26	72	2	100	52	76
Statement of Attainment	6	19	8	22	0	0	14	20
Did not complete	1	3	2	6	0	0	3	4
Total	31 (45%)	100	36 (52%)	100	2 (3%)	100	69 (100%)	100

¹Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²Region of employment at time of enrolment

Over the seven years the course has run, the size of the annual cohort has ranged between 6 and 14 participants, with the average cohort being just under 10 people (Table 7).

Table 7: Completions of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling by year, 2011-2017

	Graduated		Statement of Attainment		Did not complete		Total	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
2011	12	86	1	7	1	7	14	100
2012	7	78	1	11	1	11	9	100
2013	3	50	3	50	0	0	6	100
2014	8	89	1	11	0	0	9	100
2015	9	90	1	10	0	0	10	100
2016	8	67	3	25	1	8	12	100
2017	5	56	4	44	0	0	9	100
Total	52	76	14	20	3	4	69	100

Accreditation and recognition

The Advanced Diploma was originally accredited by ASQA in 2010 (until 2016). ECAV successfully reapplied for ASQA accreditation in 2017.

The course has been accredited by the NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board (2010-2015).



In 2015 the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) accredited the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling, one of just eight courses the ACA has accredited in Australia. The accreditation process audited the written course materials as well as the delivered workshops. The course was accredited without modification and ACA now promotes the course on its website. Graduates of the program are invited to become Level 1 Registered Counsellors with the ACA.

In 2012 ECAV was recognised by the NSW Ombudsman for its “strong track record of providing specialist training of Aboriginal counsellors” and recommended an expansion of this role³¹. The Ombudsman added that “an enhanced role for ECAV of this kind would need to be accompanied by an increase in the funding and capacity of the Centre”³².

The *Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Health Strategy* noted that “those who had completed the Advanced Diploma felt it was highly relevant and better equipped them in their roles. These participants felt that it should be recommended (or even required) that all AFHWs complete the Advanced Diploma, and that this requirement would also help AFHWs gain management support to complete the training.”³³

NSW Health RTO has introduced a program of independent auditing of all its programs. The result of the audit on the Advanced Diploma concluded that the ECAV program represented best practice.

2.1.3 Course costs

Funding model

Funding has been provided to ECAV by the MoH on an annual basis since 2010-2011 (2010/11: \$247,700; 2011/12: \$371,555; 2012/13: 245,226; 2013/14: \$0; 2014/15: \$155,000; 2015/16: \$376,667; 2016/17: \$155,000; 2017/18: \$152,526). The funding allocation has varied from year to year (Table 8).

³¹ NSW Ombudsman (2012) *Responding to Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities. A report under Part 6A of the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993*, p. 110.

³² *Ibid*, p. 110.

³³ CIRCA (2015) *Aboriginal Family Health Strategy Evaluation*, p. 32.

Table 8: MoH funding for Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling, 2010-11 to 2017-18

Year	MoH funding
2010-11	\$247,700
2011-12	\$371,555
2012-13	\$245,226
2013-14	\$0 ¹
2014-15	\$155,000
2015-16	\$376,667
2016-17	\$155,000
2017-18	\$152,526

¹The course did not run in 2014 to allow the program to be reviewed and modified

MoH funding covers just under half of total implementation costs. The remainder is contributed by ECAV using operation funds.

AFHWs employed under the NSW Health Aboriginal Family Health Strategy who attend the Advanced Diploma are not charged ECAV course fees. For other Advanced Diploma students, a sliding scale of fees is charged for attendance and assessment: \$160 per module for Aboriginal workers employed by NSW Health, \$250 per module for other NSW Aboriginal workers and \$280 per module for interstate Aboriginal workers³⁴. There are six modules in total. Travel and accommodation is the participant's responsibility. ECAV encourages the participant's employer to pay for travel and accommodation wherever possible.

Staffing

The course is organised and delivered by a staff of eight, including four Aboriginal trainers, one Indigenous (Maori) trainer and three non-Indigenous trainers. There are two trainers delivering each of the six modules, the first Aboriginal Healing Framework Module is delivered by two Aboriginal trainers, the next five modules are delivered by one Aboriginal Trainer and one non-Aboriginal trainer with specialist skill and experience in each of the areas child sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect, domestic violence, adult sexual assault.

In accordance with NSW RTO Compliance requirements, ECAV maintains a database of trainers across its programs, which includes details about each trainer's qualifications, professional development, experience and specialty areas, and this is updated annually. Trainers for the Advanced Diploma are selected from this pool, identified by ECAV as having the skills, personal attributes and experience required

³⁴ All fees correct as at July 2018, exclusive of GST.



to deliver the course to Aboriginal students. Trainers must either be Aboriginal or have extensive experience in working in Aboriginal communities, and will have worked alongside the ECAV Aboriginal team for some time demonstrating significant levels of cultural competency. Trainers also must have completed both the Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault and Child Protection) and the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling.

Implementation costs

The cost per graduate was \$53,338, the cost per graduate/SOA recipient was \$41,485, and the cost per enrolled student was \$40,364 (Table 9). MoH funding provided for the Advanced Diploma equated to \$24,524 per graduate, \$19,074 per graduate/SOA recipient or \$18,694 per enrolled student.

Table 9: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling, per student costs

Cost definition	Cost
Average annual cost of the course ¹	\$373,369
Cost per enrolled student ²	\$40,364
Cost per graduate ³	\$53,338
Cost per graduate/Statement of Attainment ⁴	\$41,485

¹Averaged over four years 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17

²Based on 37 enrolled students in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016

³Based on 28 graduates in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016

⁴Based on 36 graduates in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016

The financial analysis shows that the fee payable for the course (by workers who are not employed under the NSW Health Aboriginal Family Health Worker Strategy) represents less than 4% of the actual cost of delivery.

The cost per-student is relatively high because the number of students in each cohort is relatively small. In the eight years the course has run, the size of the participating cohort has ranged from five to 12 students, with an average of just under 10 per year. The maximum ECAV will enrol is 25 students per year, which if achieved, would bring the average per-enrolled student cost down to \$14,535.

2.1.4 Stakeholder perspectives

This section reports on the outcomes of the qualitative interviews with stakeholders, including past course participants, staff, workplace managers and other stakeholders. Course strengths, perceived outcomes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement are discussed.

Course strengths



One of the key strengths of the Advanced Diploma identified by stakeholders was that the course is **designed to meet specific industry and sector needs**. The course was widely seen as being unique in developing trauma counselling skills within an Aboriginal context and world view.

We value the qualifications even more so than mainstream qualifications because these are really focussed on our core business. They're really targeted to preparing people to actually do the work in trauma. (Manager)

Stakeholders praised the focus on **cultural safety** for participants, which enhanced their experience and likelihood of success. Course participants commented on the feeling of security they felt in the classroom, stemming from the fact that there was an Aboriginal co-presenter for each module, that the approach to learning recognised people's past trauma, vulnerability and past negative experiences in education, and established the course and the classroom as an Aboriginal space.

The whole course was delivered in a culturally appropriate way. All or most of the participants would have had lived experience of domestic violence or child protection and they made us feel really safe. (Graduate)

We start by learning about Didirri, which is similar to meditation or listening. It brings everyone in to the space and establishes it as a safe Aboriginal space. We're being sovereign people in this space. We're learning our way, we're living our way. (Educator)

Loved everything about this course. Loved the facilitators and have a love of learning in a safe environment with Aboriginal people. (Student evaluation)

I did an Aboriginal Community Counselling diploma at UNE and they had one Aboriginal teacher who was basically a support for the non-Aboriginal lecturer. The dropout rate – there were 30 students who started, and six completed. Because they were given a week of lectures, sent home, no support, nothing in place, nothing around cultural safety and even the inequality in the room – you could see that the lecturer was the lecturer and the Aboriginal person was just the support for her, to have an Aboriginal person in the room because it was a class full of Aboriginal people. So it didn't work, the retention rate was low, because the supports weren't there, whereas ECAV has all these supports and around safety and looking around people's triggers. There were people who were being triggered, but that was a safe place and people could manage that. (Graduate)

Related to cultural safety, another perceived strength of the Advanced Diploma course is that it **centralises Aboriginal world views**, and at the core of this is the Aboriginal Healing Framework developed for the program. A number of



stakeholders believed this made the course unique. They felt the course does not impose Western concepts, but rather starts from the shared lived experience of trauma and Aboriginal principles of healing, and overlays social, psychological and developmental theories where relevant.

During the modules it's like you start at a place and then you shift through, we go on a journey. Its trauma informed, it's Aboriginal world view. And for the Advanced Diploma, the foundation is the Aboriginal Healing Framework and we intertwine that through all the modules. So we get the Western way of doing things and then we put it into comparison with the Aboriginal Healing Framework, and use that framework to go back into our communities. And I don't know of another place that brings those two things together and weaves it through. (Educator)

Yes [Aboriginal views and values are incorporated into the course]. Not to say everything is gospel but the values are embedded throughout and you can add or enhance those in whichever way you need to, and tweak to suit each community. It is hard to do that across everything but could relate it across our communities and see the similarities and differences. (Graduate)

Participants reported a key factor in providing cultural safety is the course's **close links to community** and continuous oversight by ACMAG. As well as providing input into curriculum development and review, ACMAG members are available in or out of session to provide support and advice where needed.

In our Professional Development Circles, concepts get spoken about – e.g. at the latest one we talked about the concept of cultural supervision, and changing the name to 'cultural care', and creating guidelines, and getting away from the idea of supervision because it doesn't fit with the Aboriginal world view. So that's a good example of how ACMAG feeds into the courses directly. That's one of many that's happened over the years. It's yarning in a decolonised way. (ECAV Staff Member)

At the same time, the course was widely praised for its **robust and evidence-based approach** to equipping participants with the skills to counsel and support people who disclose being a victim or perpetrator of Aboriginal family or domestic violence. The pairing of a standard unit of competency with a specifically tailored enterprise nationally accredited unit of competency for each module was thought to provide a strength and industry relevance to the training.

The beauty of the Aboriginal Healing Framework module is that it's got a national competency and it's also got an ECAV specialised competency that's developed on the basis of the needs of the industry. And I think that's what



makes ECAV training so unique, because of those specialised ECAV units. National units of competency are all portable, and ECAV units make it specialised. The way ASQA is set up you can't have two identical courses and that's why ECAV is unique. (ACMAG Member)

Referring to the Australian Counselling Association's (ACA's) accreditation of the Advanced Diploma in 2015, a representative of the ACA commented on the alignment of the Advanced Diploma with work skills and the ACA's strong support for the program:

There are very few providers that meet the ACA standards. The Aboriginal Healing Framework and ECAV's use of narrative therapy in the course is particularly relevant for preparing students for work in their field. The work they do in the workshops closely reflect what they'll do in their work... It's not an easy course to do. It requires a lot of commitment and a lot of work. It does require students to go out and deliver, and it requires a high degree of self-awareness. ACA fully supports the course. It's quite a high demand area of work, and to be frank, we need a lot more Aboriginal trauma counsellors. If more people did this qualification we'd be in a much better place. (Australian Counselling Association representative)

A representative of the NSW Health RTO also commented that:

ASQA recognition in itself is recognition of quality and value. You have to be able to demonstrate industry needs through consultation in order to have a chance of being accredited. (NSW Health RTO representative)

Another strength stakeholders identified is the **high level of support provided by ECAV, both inside and outside the classroom**. The organisation's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff were said to provide a level of support that most students have not previously experienced. This support includes ongoing phone and email contact from the point of application through to graduation, encouragement and counsel when needed, offers of assistance via tutors, practical assistance around accommodation, and financial help. Stakeholders agreed that this level of support was not only appropriate, but fundamental to the high rates of retention and completion.

There was excellent support from ECAV staff. They kept the group motivated all the time. (Graduate)

The ECAV staff couldn't do enough for you. It's good to have a lot of humour when you're doing a course like this and you're dealing with a lot of heavy content. (Graduate)



It was more one-on-one but you had more support. You go to uni and they give you a lecture and then you go back and have to do it all yourself and do the research, and if you're not confident in doing that and not sure how to do it, it's really difficult. I ended up going to a tutor to nut out what I needed to do, but for other people who didn't have the money for a tutor then it becomes quite expensive, hence the dropout rate if you're not confident in what you're doing....I left school in Year 10 and I had some hearing problems, so I never learned how to spell properly, so going into an academic environment, you've got to know how to spell, you've got to know how to reference, you've got to know how to do all those things and if you don't know how to do it then the only way you can do it is to hire a tutor. So I basically had to learn from scratch how to do all of that. (Graduate)

They deliver the structured modules to the different levels of the students in the class. I found that was really good and no-one was left behind. If there was a lack of understanding about something we would have a really good discussion about the how and why, and everyone was then brought up to speed. (Graduate)

The **mix of learning and assessment approaches** was considered a further strength of the program. Rather than relying solely on traditional pedagogy, the facilitators use activity-based learning such as role-playing and case studies, as well as approaches that use a variety of senses such as sound and touch. Assessment tasks include in-class discussions, role plays and presentations, as well as more traditional home-prepared essays and assignments.

I find that the in-class assessments are really useful and easier for me to learn and concentrate. Also I feel more supported having the students and facilitators in the room with me while working on assessments. (Student evaluation)

The learning was better [than mainstream courses] because it involved many different ways. It was more kinesetic. (Graduate)

I think it's a different way of going to uni. I did the Advanced Diploma, and I've done a Masters degree, so going back and doing the pathway, at least one section of it, is really telling because it catered to the way I learned. Whereas taking the academic line through university, I had to learn all of that from the start and that was a lot more difficult than going through the pathway because it focuses on your learning a lot better. (Graduate)

It was really well designed and suited to Aboriginal people who, 1) are working, and 2) it fits in with your work program and it was really easy to understand. The way it is delivered is absolutely amazing. It is delivered in a cultural way



that supports all of the different people in the course. We all bring different concerns and issues in the ways we learn and for our course last year it was really well structured to meet the learning needs of all of us. (Graduate)

All the participants we spoke to thought the **assessments were relevant and appropriately tested their skills**. Some participants said they found the assessments very challenging, and this was echoed by some other stakeholders who commented on the rigour of the assessments.

The assessments reinforced the learning. They made us rethink everything. (Graduate)

The assessments were relevant, they showed us different techniques when counselling and doing it in a cultural way. (Graduate)

My learning, and the way I learn, was completely supported. I was able to go to Sydney in those weeks and do the face to face learning which was really helpful and supportive. The level of support I had in completing assessments was great. Gave me the opportunity to have the week of learning and take that information away and put it into my own words – this was really good. We all think differently so it is not a structure that you couldn't understand because we could write our assessments in our own way based on our own understanding. (Graduate)

It's rigorous – there are no short cuts. They pursue people for assessment tasks and if the assessment tasks are not completed to a high enough standard, they don't graduate. (Clinical Supervisor & Workplace Manager)

Past participants generally felt the **structure of the course worked very well**, broken into six modules spaced throughout the year and delivered in five-day face-to-face blocks. The consensus was that this is the only suitable mode for people who work full time and who live outside Sydney. They were also clear that the course needs to be delivered face-to-face, rather than online, because of the importance of the class discussions, role plays and peer support.

Broken into six modules worked well for those working full time. (Graduate)

Most of us were working full time, so breaking it into smaller chunks worked well. (Graduate)

The **inclusion of mandatory clinical supervision** was considered a key strength of the course, by participants, educators and managers alike.

Absolutely essential. It was one of the aspects that kept me going. (Graduate)



The clinical supervision was amazing. I had the best supervisor and I still call her today. (Graduate)

It's made me realise the importance of clinical supervision. At first you don't know what it's for and what you're going to say. I seek it out now and I make sure my staff have access to clinical supervision, to learn about coping strategies. (Graduate)

It was a bit [difficult] at first but only because I had a supervisor that then had other obligations so I had to get a different supervisor. Once I settled into that, it was fine, and great to have the face-to-face support when in Parramatta for the week. This was really good and valuable and they were great at listening and talking through any concerns or issues you had so when I returned to my workplace I had access and was able to contact those people when and if I needed it. I did this and they are busy people too so I found it was really good they were able to make that time for me. (Graduate)

Another identified strength of the course is the **built-in processes for review and continuous improvement**. At the end of each module, facilitators and ECAV staff and management meet to review the module, review student feedback and identify any improvements that could be made.

Perceived outcomes

Participants, managers, staff and other stakeholders identified a range of perceived outcomes from the Advanced Diploma course.

Firstly, it was felt the course **enabled participants to develop counselling skills and be trained as fully qualified counsellors**. Participants, employers and industry stakeholders praised the course for the high quality skills students developed and were able to apply in their work with clients and co-workers.

The course made me feel well prepared for counselling. I'd never done counselling before so I was developing skills for the first time. They're skills that apply to lots of situations – you learn to communicate better. (Graduate)

I use the skills every day. I may not be directly doing counselling but it's all part of what I do. I use the skills I learned in managing staff, in listening to them, in helping them. I've become a better manager by doing the course. (Graduate)

I connected with it really well. We were role modelling – a lot of practice work, so actually doing it and getting immediate feedback. (Graduate)



I do it all the time now I'm in the therapy world. I'm a case worker but I'm there more than the therapist. I use the skills every day. Now I can communicate much better. I practice it all the time. (Graduate)

[The course has impacted] in a big way for sure. Just in the way I supervise and support my team members and provide knowledge and skills to them so that they can work more effectively, in a cultural way, with communities and clients. (Graduate)

I think probably the biggest thing for me is it has given me a clear understanding of historical issues amongst Aboriginal people and community and it has given me more of a desire to work from a framework rather than from my own beliefs. Even having your own beliefs and understanding but working from a framework that supports Aboriginal people and community in a holistic way. (Graduate)

The Advanced Diploma equips them with practical counselling skills. It's really apparent when they come back from the blocks that they come back with an enhanced capacity. (Manager)

Some participants said the course enlightened them about better practice, while others talked about how completing the qualification has gained them greater respect from their co-workers and clients:

I think it's a life changing course because it's got a very good cultural aspect and you're not just learning but you're healing at the same time, growing with this group of people that's now your new family, kind of, and being able to grow with the knowledge as well. And then take that back to your community – it's something that you're never going to get anywhere else. And it's being able to bring that professionalism back to your community and be trusted as a professional. Because often when you're in an Aboriginal identified position, it's not what you know but who you know, so that when you bring what you know you're looked at in a different way. So I'm currently doing the Advanced Diploma and every time it's something new, something different. It's helped me more with my clients, just being able to support and understand them better. (Participant)

I remember hearing the story of one of the graduates in the Advanced Diploma who said she felt it gave her permission to utterly be, not only an equal, but teach mainstream services about the families she was working with, about their experiences and what they needed from these mainstream services and she felt she could go into that room with confidence and had something to offer. And she also had that experience of being listened to and she felt it was the course



that had given her both the confidence and helped her find her competence to do that, and she was not only treated as an equal but she was listened to and valued and it made the difference for the family she was working with.
(ACMAG Member)

Some graduates felt the course had **improved their employment opportunities**. For example, one graduate said her employment was contingent on her completion of the Advanced Diploma. Others reported that they had applied for and obtained a counselling position after completing the course, gained the confidence to apply for a more senior role, and developed the skills and confidence to leave a job she disliked and get a new job she now loves.

Participants also identified **positive outcomes in their personal lives** as a result of undertaking the Advanced Diploma. For many, completion of the course increased their levels of confidence and feelings of self-efficacy, while a number also talked about how their participation helped with healing their own experiences of trauma. Some also identified significant benefits that have resulted for their families.

It's opened my eyes to that I can get a proper job now. Because I've got six kids, I always just thought, 'I'm a mum'. If it wasn't for ECAV I wouldn't be where I am. (Graduate)

In my personal life, I've grown so much. When I was in Cert IV I was angry because of what I'd been through. I have much better understanding now. My kids are now looking to me and saying, 'I can do it if Mum's doing it'.
(Graduate)

I just know the benefits from the courses outweigh the difficulties – the benefits you're going to give your family and community and yourself. (Graduate)

For my family there is pride that we have people in my family who are becoming educated and getting these sorts of qualifications and bringing these skills to community and building the workforce in the community and putting strong educated people back where they need to be. It has certainly given me a lot more confidence in putting across Aboriginal views, and if there are misunderstandings I feel confident in talking to people about how Aboriginal people do things and the differences. (Graduate)

Finally, workplace managers said that **significant benefits have resulted to the organisations** that employ Aboriginal staff undertaking the Advanced Diploma. Perceived benefits included improved capacity to recruit Aboriginal staff, improved levels of work satisfaction and retention of Aboriginal staff, improvements in worker capacity and performance, increased capacity to engage and retain Aboriginal clients,



and learnings that Aboriginal staff undertaking the course have brought back and shared with their co-workers.

What we observe is people acting on their own initiative and feeling safe to do so, speaking up where they wouldn't have done before. We see that improvement, and we see that initiative transfer to their engagement of Aboriginal families. (Manager)

We entered into a process of becoming culturally appropriate and accessible to Aboriginal people and having the designated Aboriginal positions helps us to achieve that. Aboriginal staff bring really relevant experience and skills to the team and are able to access Aboriginal clients in a way that non-Aboriginal staff couldn't possibly do. (Manager)

The courses have assisted us with recruitment because we've been able to recruit Aboriginal staff and part of the recruitment is the expectation that they will undertake one or more of the ECAV pathway courses. So it's an incentive [to join the organisation] because we fully support them through the program. (Manager)

Our retention rate of Aboriginal kids and families is now the same as with non-Aboriginal kids. (Manager)

Challenges

Stakeholders reported that some aspects of implementing the Advanced Diploma had been challenging.

Retaining participants through the course has sometimes been difficult, and a key reason for providing a high level of support. Many of the past participants interviewed for this evaluation said at times they struggled and found the course challenging and confronting, but that the support provided by the other participants and ECAV staff pulled them through. A number of students also struggle with being in an educational environment again after past negative experiences in mainstream education, which is often characterised by a lack of support and high levels of attrition. Several participants commented that the way the course challenged them on a personal level was also one of its strengths, because by working through their own trauma the course helped them to become better counsellors.

A lot of your life experiences helps with the understanding of the course content and also how you can transfer those life skills into learning and apply it to your workplace and how I work with community. This was really important, to sort out how your life experiences impact on you, and how you convey that in working with community. (Graduate)



The fellow students and encouragement of teachers and students was great and kept me going. The course was delivered in a culturally safe environment. There were a couple of moments where there was one student who got a bit angry at something and we were able to deal with it. I think we could do this because the course is very therapeutic so we were able to use this approach and make sure they were alright and smooth it out. (Graduate)

It was reported that **workplace support** for participants undertaking the Advanced Diploma (and Graduate Certificate) could be inconsistent. It was reported that while some participants had workplace managers and supervisors who were highly supportive, others experienced difficulties in obtaining release to attend study blocks, were required to use annual leave for study blocks, were told it was up to them to catch up on missed work in their own time, and generally felt unsupported by their managers. It was suggested by a few interviewees that workplace support was better in NSW Health agencies than in NGOs, however, a few reports about unsupportive managers related to people working in LHDs.

My managers weren't really supportive. They don't really understand. In NGOs, study release is much harder. [NSW] Health is generally good. I had to come back after studying in Sydney and catch up with work. They just don't understand. There was someone who had to take time without pay to do the course because their Department wouldn't pay. (Graduate)

I have a really good Supervisor at work as well and I found anything relating to my course I didn't haven't any problems in discussing my concerns and issues and always felt supported and helped towards solutions. My experience was really good and positive and I can't sort of see anywhere to improve, but of course more opportunities for supervision while in the block study and particularly the group supervisions were really good. (Graduate)

If depends on whether workplaces release them or not. Some students have to use their own leave to do the courses and some did do this in our group. Even when the courses are most relevant to people's work they were still not being released to participate. It is a six week course, and we only get four weeks annual leave, and not much study leave, so if you don't get that support from your employer then the incentive really isn't there to do it. My work was very supportive and I didn't have to use my own leave as my workplace see that it is relevant to my role. (Graduate)

I had two bosses. The first boss was very supportive, gave me study leave, encouraged me. My second boss was not supportive at all. At one stage she said I couldn't go and study, so I threatened to leave. At the end I didn't want to



come back. I think there needs to be more work done with managers.
(Graduate)

The institutions of health are layered with racism. For some managers it's quite a patronising view they have, that they're helping an Aboriginal worker to better themselves, they don't see what that Aboriginal worker is bringing to the organisation. (Manager)

One way ECAV has sought to address this problem has been for an ECAV staff member and the participant's clinical supervisor to meet with each participant's manager or supervisor, in order to explain to them what the course involves, the demands on participant's time, and how the manager can help to support the participant.

A few stakeholders commented that the course was often challenging and confronting for participants, that the material covered and the discussions in the blocks were often disturbing, and that participants often returned to their workplace 'shaken up'. Some participants said that this is where they sometimes experienced difficulties with their manager, as they found it difficult to operate at full capacity for a few days after returning from study blocks. A few managers spoke about how it was important to understand and support their Aboriginal staff through the course:

It's a lot about how you support a worker going through the program. I have not had one Aboriginal worker who has not had a history of trauma and a history of racism, so that raises a whole heap of issues. So it's not just a learning program but also a healing process too. A heap of work has to be done around learning how those workers need to be supported. There will be some instability with the worker at the start of the process because they're processing their own trauma at the same time, but that settles down and they come through it stronger. (Manager)

As a manager it's important to support workers to get through the rough bits when they're going to be unsettled, but it is short term. (Manager)

An ECAV staff member added that it was important that managers distinguish between training issues and performance issues, and to support their workers to not only get through the course but also to improve their practice.

Training isn't going to address performance issues. You have to support your workers. (ECAV Staff Member)

A further implementation challenge has been **managing the considerable task of RTO compliance** whilst at the same time ensuring the program retains student interest and enthusiasm, and remains culturally safe.



You need a particular blend of skills to know how to deliver and know your audience and how you can hold the group and keep them complying and ensure they don't run away screaming. For example just recently we did 93 assessments in one day. We're always brainstorming how we can meet ASQA requirements and do it in a way that's safe and engaging. ASQA requirements don't always match what's required to make the course culturally safe – e.g. the language requirements. (ECAV Staff Member)

Furthermore, managing RTO compliance and ASQA accreditation takes up a great deal of time; ECAV estimated RTO compliance takes about 20 hours per week. In 2016-17 ECAV went through the process of reaccreditation with ASQA, which involved 12 months of consultation, six months report preparation and employment of a dedicated staff member for two days per week over 18 months. ECAV reported that without the support from its existing infrastructure and good understanding of ASQA requirements, it would have a challenge to continue to deliver the course.

A number of participants have reportedly experienced **difficulties in obtaining ABSTUDY support**, and for a small number this has meant not being able to attend a module, or withdrawing from the course. Individual participants have to submit their ABSTUDY application to their local Centrelink office, where it is also assessed. It was reported that this has led to inconsistencies in the assessment and approval of applications, with some potentially eligible applicants being denied support. It was also reported to create tension within the training environment, as it places considerable pressure on trainers to ensure that financial issues do not undermine participant learning.

Some of the people in the course found it hard with financing it when they have to pay their own way or try to get ABSTUDY. One lady missed a week because she couldn't get it sorted out in time. She had to come back a year later to do that block and when we graduated she didn't get her certificate because ABSTUDY hadn't made her payment. ABSTUDY could be more supportive. (Graduate)

Another significant challenge for ECAV has been **the impact of uncertainty of funding**. For the service, allocation of an unknown and varying amount from year to year has made it difficult to plan and promote the course, and requires considerable administrative time negotiating with the LHD, which holds the funds, to ensure the money is quarantined and rolled over to the next financial year (bearing in mind the course runs over a calendar year, not a financial year).

One-off funds allocated annually has placed enormous pressure for ECAV in maintaining roll over of funds between financial years, management are in a position where they literally have to fight for these funds to remain in the



ECAV budget to deliver throughout the calendar year. Recurrent funding would immediately eradicate this issue. (ECAV)

Opportunities for improvement

While stakeholders suggested few improvements to the course itself, some thought that an **increase in the progression from Certificate IV to Advanced Diploma** would be beneficial, not only in terms of developing the workforce, but also to feed into the Graduate Certificate and Master of Social Work (Qualifying).

It was suggested by a workplace manager that **providing information about the units of competency to managers and workplace clinical supervisors** would be beneficial, so that they are better placed to align the participant's practice with their studies.

One educator commented that, while the co-facilitation model works well, in the future it would be good to see the **course delivered entirely by Aboriginal facilitators**.

In terms of content and assessments, past participants had little to suggest to improve the course. A few commented that they preferred the in-class assessments to the take-home assignments, and this had a lot to do with the demands on their time when they returned to their jobs, families and communities.

A few past participants who lived in regional areas talked about the difficulties they experienced being away from their families and work for a week each module, and some felt it would have been ideal if **the course could have been held closer to home**.

Just being away from my work is a challenge. We all have to still work while we are away. For me it was letting my trainers know I would have to bring my laptop out. There were times I would have to take a phone call and they were really respectful and supportive of that. Bringing it out to my town would be good. (Graduate)

I can see how it would be difficult for some people to spend time away for study when they are working and the distance. Be good to have more Aboriginal people with these qualifications in the rural and remote communities but the distance is a definite barrier. (Graduate)

Several stakeholders also felt the issues around **access to ABSTUDY** needed to be addressed.



2.2 Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)

2.2.1 Course description

The Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services combines policy, practice and research in the human and community services industry. The program aims to graduate critically reflective and skilled practitioners for the health and community services sector and other fields of practice.

The Interpersonal Trauma stream was developed jointly by ECAV and the School of Social Work at the University of Sydney specifically for Aboriginal workers in the areas of family violence and child protection. It was intended as an accelerated pathway to university study for Aboriginal people working in, or wishing to work in, the field of family violence, who often have extensive practice experience and skills, but who lack formal educational qualifications. A key reason for developing the Graduate Certificate course was to address the anecdotal view of some people in the sector that the Advanced Diploma, as a VET qualification, was inferior to a university qualification. The Graduate Certificate was developed to assist pathway participants to move from competency based practice to understanding the deep theoretical praxis.

The first course ran in 2013, and to date four courses have been completed (the course did not run in 2014, to allow the program to be reviewed and modified).

Students who complete the Graduate Certificate with a credit average are eligible to continue into the Master of Social Work (Qualifying) course. Usually the entry requirement is an undergraduate degree, however as the Graduate Certificate has been assessed at the same AQF level, this qualification is accepted.

Structure

Completion of the course requires four units of study over the course of one year. Each unit is delivered face-to-face on campus at the University of Sydney Camperdown campus over five days. The course structure is summarised in Table 10.

**Table 10: Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) Modules and Learning Outcomes**

Module	Learning outcomes
OP1010 Child Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the range and diversity of wellbeing and development in children from national and international perspectives. • Define child abuse and neglect and understand and appreciate the immediate and long-term psychological and social consequence of child abuse and neglect, including the harm caused to child who experience domestic violence. • Engage with and understand the nexus between research, theory and practice in relation to child wellbeing and protection. • Identify the values and ideologies underpinning the principles of child wellbeing and protection. • Demonstrate an ability to critically reflect on the broader political context their own experiences, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours and how these inform their practice. • Understand the role of key stakeholders in child wellbeing and protection and their responsibilities as mandatory reporters. • Identify and implement individual, family and community strategies that promote the safety, welfare and well-being of young children particularly those children who are 'at risk' or have experienced child abuse and neglect. • Understand and demonstrate the significance of working positively and in partnership with families as well as other agencies and professionals in the Child and Family sector to ensure safety and security for young children.
OP1011 Sexual Assault in the Australian Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the socio-political context, nature and extent of sexual violence. • Identify the short and long term impacts of sexual violence and the implications of intervention in a variety of contexts. • Engage critically with a range of theoretical approaches to understanding sexual violence. • Articulate the ways in which gender inequality intersects with the inequalities based on factors such as race, culture, class, age and ability to shape the experiences of victims/survivors of sexual violence. • Demonstrate skills in responding to adult and child survivors of sexual assault through policy, practice and research. • Demonstrate understanding of sexual assault intervention in a range of complex contexts. • Demonstrate skills in collaboration and team work.
OP1012 Theory to Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an understanding of the links between broad 'big picture' theories and current professional and individual practice. • Describe and critique theories and models of work which influence current practice. • Address professional practice in the light of new knowledge and the current contexts of practice. • Study a range of theories and perspectives which direct and influence human services and community work and be able to understand their strengths and limitations.



Module	Learning outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address professional practice in the light of new knowledge and the current contexts of practice. • Demonstrate one's own examined espoused theoretical ideas and 'ideas in use' through critical incident analysis. • Develop and rehearse ideas for practice. • Examine the political, sociological and psychological contexts in which the practice/theory relationships exist and are maintained.
OP1013 Trauma Informed Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the trauma model for understanding and responding to interpersonal violence. • Critically analyse the strengths and limitations of the trauma model. • Demonstrate skills in trauma-focused work with individuals, groups and communities. • Demonstrate understanding of the key elements involved in establishing and supporting trauma informed services for victims/survivors of interpersonal and intergenerational violence. • Engage in critically reflective practice. • Demonstrate skills in collaborative and team work.

At the start of each module, the students participate in a session with the University Librarian to review and reinforce research strategies (e.g. database searches, accessing documents in different formats) and referencing techniques.

Entry requirements

Aboriginal workers who have completed the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling are encouraged to enrol in the Graduate Certificate. NSW Health sexual assault and child protection counselling services clinical staff who have extensive practice experience but do not have an undergraduate degree may also be eligible to enrol.

Delivery

The course is delivered jointly by the School of Social Work, University of Sydney and ECAV. Modules 1 and 3 are delivered by University of Sydney, and modules 2 and 4 are delivered by ECAV.

All four modules are delivered on-site at the University of Sydney Camperdown campus in four, one-week blocks over 12 months.

Assessment

Each module is assessed via 3-4 assessment tasks, including in-class writing tasks, individual and group presentations, essays, reports, reflections and simulations. University rules and assessment criteria apply to assignment submission, including submission via the University's assessment upload system, plagiarism scans, loss of marks for late submission and obtaining formal extensions where required.

Systems for monitoring and continuous improvement



Records of student attendance and achievement are kept by ECAV and the University of Sydney. Student feedback is collected via a student evaluation form each module. The University of Sydney and ECAV staff meet twice a year to discuss course implementation and content. The result of these meetings may include changes to delivery approaches, course readings and assessment tasks.

2.2.2 Course achievements

Participation and completion

Over four years, 29 people commenced the course (between six and 10 each year). Of these, 25 (86%) graduated with the full qualification and four (14%) did not complete. All four of these students commenced the course but discontinued during the year.

The majority of course participants were female (83%). All but one of the women completed and graduated, while only two of the five men completed and graduated (Table 11).

Table 11: Completions of the Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) by Gender, 2013-2017

	Males		Females		Persons	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	2	40	23	96	25	86
Statement of Attainment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Did not complete	3	60	1	4	4	14
Total	5 (17%)	100	24 (83%)	100	29 (100%)	100

Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence

Participants ranged in age from 25 to 62 years at the time of commencement. The vast majority (83%) were over 40 years of age (Table 12).

Table 12: Completions of the Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) by age, 2013-2017^{1,2}

	Under 40 years		40 years or over		All ages	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	5	100	20	83	25	86
Statement of Attainment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Did not complete	0	0	4	17	4	14



Total	5 (17%)	100	24 (83%)	100	29 (100%)	100
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¹Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²Age at time of enrolment

Of the 29 participants who participated in the Graduate Certificate between 2013 and 2017, just over one-third (n=11) of participants worked for NSW Health, and all but one of these completed and graduated. About another one-third (n=10) worked for ACCHSs, and all but one of these graduated. Most others were employed in non-government organisations or other public agencies (eg FACS, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse) (n=8). All except three of those who worked for organisations other than NSW Health completed and graduated the program (Table 13).

Table 13: Completions of the Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) by employer, 2013-2017^{1,2}

	NSW Health	ACCHS	Other	All employers
	<i>count</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>count</i>
Graduated	10	9	6	25
Statement of Attainment	0	0	0	0
Did not complete	1	1	2	4
Total	11 (38%)	10 (34%)	8 (28%)	29 (100%)

¹Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²Employer at time of enrolment

Around one-third (n=10) lived in Greater Sydney while just under two-thirds were from regional or rural NSW (n=18) (Table 14). One person was from interstate.

Table 14: Completions of the Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) by region of employment, 2013-2017^{1,2}

	Greater Sydney	Regional or rural NSW	Interstate	All
	<i>count</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>count</i>
Graduated	9	15	1	25
Statement of Attainment	0	0	0	0
Did not complete	1	3	0	4
Total	10 (34%)	18 (62%)	1 (3%)	29 (100%)



¹Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²Region of employment at time of enrolment

About one-quarter (n=7) of participants were employed as AFHWs at the time they commenced (Table 15). All AFHWs graduated from the course.

Table 15: Completions of the Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) by position, 2013-2017^{1,2}

	Aboriginal Family Health Worker	Other	All positions
	<i>count</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>count</i>
Graduated	7	18	25
Statement of Attainment	0	0	0
Did not complete	0	4	4
Total	7 (24%)	22 (76%)	29 (100%)

¹Source: Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²Position at time of enrolment

The average enrolment per year has been 7.25 people, with a peak enrolment of 10 in 2017. The graduation rate has remained high over all four years, with an average graduation rate of 86% (Table 16).

Table 16: Completions of the Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) by year, 2013-2017

	Graduated	DNC	Total	Graduation rate
2013	7	0	7	100%
2015	5	1	6	83%
2016	5	1	6	83%
2017	8	2	10	80%
Total	25	4	29	86% (average)

Accreditation and recognition

In 2015, the MoH recognised the three-year pathway culminating in awarding of the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Health (Interpersonal Trauma) as having the equivalence of a bachelor degree and that the Graduate Certificate should be recognised as a graduate qualification under the Aboriginal Health Education Officers' Determination. This determination meant that from 2015 onwards, graduates of the Graduate Diploma employed by NSW Health could access the salary grade of the Aboriginal Health Education Officer – Graduate Classification.

2.2.3 Course costs

Funding model

The Graduate Certificate is partly funded by MoH funding, with the remaining funds drawn from ECAV operational funds. The annual funding allocation from MoH has varied from year to year, but on average covers just under half the actual implementation costs (2012/13: \$126,329; 2013/14: \$0; 2014/15: \$77,500; 2015/16: \$188,333; 2016/17: \$77,500; 2017/18: \$76,263) (Table 17).

Table 17: MoH funding for the Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma), 2012-13 to 2017-18

Year	MoH funding
2012-13	\$126,329
2013-14	\$0 ¹
2014-15	\$77,500
2015-16	\$188,333
2016-17	\$77,500
2017-18	\$76,263

¹The course did not run in 2014 to allow the program to be reviewed and modified

The University of Sydney is compensated via scholarships costed at approximately \$14,000 per student. The University of Sydney invoices ECAV annually for the total cost of scholarships when student enrolments have been confirmed prior to the commencement of Semester 1.

Participants may be eligible to apply for ABSTUDY Away from Base support for their travel and accommodation expenses, and this can be arranged through the University of Sydney.

Course staffing

The course is jointly administered and delivered by the University of Sydney and ECAV. Modules 1 and 3 are typically facilitated by a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Work, University of Sydney. Modules 2 and 4 have been co-facilitated by two ECAV educators each time, one Aboriginal educator and one non-Aboriginal educator.

Administrative support is provided by the School of Social Work, University of Sydney, and by ECAV. The University of Sydney assists students with ABSTUDY applications.

Implementation costs



Course costs were calculated using four years of budget data provided by ECAV. The average annual cost of the course was \$238,373. MoH funding covered 46% of the total cost of providing the course. No fees were received because all participants received scholarships. The remaining 54% of costs were covered by ECAV operational funds.

The cost per enrolled student was \$34,053 and the cost per graduate was \$42,066 (Table 18). MoH funding equated to \$20,196 per graduate or \$16,349 per enrolled student.

Table 18: Graduate Certificate in Human & Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) – Actual cost per student¹

Cost definition	Cost
Total cost (delivery years only)	\$715,118
Average annual cost of the course ¹	\$238,373
Average cost per enrolled student ²	\$34,053
Average cost per graduate ³	\$42,066

¹Average over three years 2013/14, 2015/16 and 2016/17

²Based on 21 enrolled students

³Based on 17 graduates

The annual intake has ranged from six to 10 participants each year, however if the annual intake increased to 15, this would bring the average per-enrolled student cost down to \$15,892.

2.2.4 Stakeholder perspectives

This section reports findings of the qualitative interviews with stakeholders, including past course participants, staff, workplace managers and other stakeholders. Course strengths, perceived outcomes, challenges and opportunities for improvement are discussed.

Course strengths

As with the Advanced Diploma, a key perceived strength of the course was the degree of **cultural safety** provided to participants. Many people commented that the prospect of attending University is daunting for most Aboriginal participants, many of whom have travelled from regional areas, and most of whom have never set foot on a university campus.

Several strategies are used by the facilitators to strengthen cultural safety, including, at the start of each module, the development of a group agreement about what would keep the participants safe during the study week, check-ins at the start and the end of the day, and having an Aboriginal co-facilitator (Modules 2 and 4 only). The Course Coordinator at the University is Aboriginal and all staff involved in the program have an open-door policy for students wishing to see them. During the



orientation at the start of Module 1, students are introduced to the Koori Centre on campus, which hosts a lunch for the students where they are informed about what the Centre offers, including access to free tutoring is required.

I've never seen cultural safety like that anywhere. (Graduate)

If we look historically at why Aboriginal people have such low numbers within academic institutions such as universities, it's because of historically what has happened to Aboriginal people in schooling and learning and the impacts of colonisation. And so what this course is doing is [that] we address all that, we will not have our people walking straight from those experiences they've had of racism, and everything else they've experienced in an academic institution, to step into an unsafe place again. So we create that safety that steps them into that, we change that dominant story. (ACMAG Member)

There's no assault or challenge or denial of culture. When I've spoken to people about the course and their experiences at uni, I've known people who have dropped out of uni. They've been doing Aboriginal studies and the teacher has failed them and they were like, 'Why?' So people have these experiences where they're continuously being challenged on their identity and their culture and it's not being valued, and then you come into a program like this where people have similar world views and similar experiences, even when you're not connected to culture because you've been taken away from that, they connect you back to that. (Graduate)

That is the difference, you're in the majority. Because when you do mainstream studies you are a minority in that classroom. Most of the time there's maybe one or two Aboriginal people in that room, where here everybody's the same...It empowers you to speak about things you wouldn't speak about in a mainstream classroom, because it's safe to do so. (Graduate)

One educator felt that what distinguishes the course from other mainstream courses, is its **relevance to Aboriginal individuals and communities**. This is achieved through careful selection of readings that present Aboriginal perspectives and critiques of theories that stem from Aboriginal ways of seeing; and through the discussions which consider the issues in terms of the non-mainstream (including Aboriginality, disability, non-English speakers) and how in many instances the theories *don't* fit some population groups.

It was all very relevant and we had an opportunity to express ourselves and feel that you are left on your own. We could share the conversation, which goes hand in hand. As Aboriginal people this is very important. It was respectful learning of each other. (Graduate)



Another perceived strength was the way **the Graduate Certificate complements and builds on the Advanced Diploma and Certificate IV**, is a seamless and logical progression from the practice-focused VET course to the theory-focused tertiary course. While the Advanced Diploma develops skills, the Graduate Certificate was seen to overlay the theory behind the practice, which helps participants to understand *why* they are doing what they do.

They feel like they've been given a language to use to advocate for their clients.
(Educator)

The Graduate Certificate was thought to **provide a positive, safe and supported introduction to University**, scaffolded by the ECAV Pathway. Many of the participants had previously not envisaged themselves ever setting foot on, let alone graduating from, a University.

I'm the first person in my family to go to University. (Graduate)

I left school when I was 14 and I never worried about going back to school, and then they talked me into doing the Cert IV when I was about 55. So I never thought I'd go to University. With this pathway, it just took me to there.
(Graduate)

All the past participants interviewed commented on the high level of support provided by both ECAV and the University of Sydney.

Many participants commented positively on the **quality of teaching**. The teaching staff were seen to be knowledgeable, culturally appropriate and sensitive to student needs.

All the teachers were great. If anyone wasn't following they took their time with them. (Graduate)

Having Aboriginal teachers doing it makes it feel like you belong. (Graduate)

The **structure of the course into four blocks** was viewed very positively. This was seen as particularly helpful for people who work full time, or who live away from Sydney, and would find more frequent attendance difficult.

Many participants from outside Sydney felt they **benefitted positively from having to travel to Sydney for block study**. For some it was about networking, for others it gave them permission to focus on themselves and their learning.

Going to Sydney was valuable because we got to meet people from all over and made networks in Sydney. (Graduate)



The travelling helped, it meant we got to yarn while we were there. It was good having that time to just concentrate on the course. (Graduate)

The travel was good – I loved it. It was good to be able to concentrate on me. If it had been in [my home town] I would have got dragged into going to work. (Graduate)

Perceived outcomes

A key outcome that many stakeholders talked about was the **development of sophisticated ways of thinking and understanding family violence**. Educators saw the importance of the course in moving students from the ‘how-to’ to thinking about the ‘why’ and the bigger system, and how these structures affect children and families.

I see them on their first day of uni and I see them again in the third module, and I think the difference is quite astounding. I’m talking about academic confidence. I see a difference in their ability to write, to engage in debate and ability to understand the theoretical concepts. I see them shell-shocked almost on Day 1, and by the third module, they’re confident and they’re capable. (Educator)

It was felt by some that completion of the Graduate Certificate **places graduates on an equal footing with those who have a bachelor degree and opens the door to career progression and higher levels of remuneration**.

[Participants] are unlikely to be able to undertake university studies via typical entry pathways because prior educational disadvantage means that they may not meet entry criteria. In addition the requirements of study are often not possible because of their family/work commitments. Consequently, they are often doing similar work to colleagues with formal educational qualifications, but are unable to achieve equal salary rates and progression. The Grad Cert provides them with a post grad qualification, that is equivalent to a bachelor degree on the Australian Qualification Standard. I understand that NSW Health has recognised this for the purpose of paying a graduate salary. This clearly is a great benefit to graduates in having their expertise appropriately remunerated. (Educator)

The course **provides a gateway to postgraduate study**, most notably the Master of Social Work (Qualifying) at the University of Sydney, however the University will also assist graduates to access other Universities’ postgraduate programs if desired.

The skills and knowledge are portable so they can extend past trauma work and work in other fields as well. I’m getting calls from people who have done the Grad Cert who are wanting to come back and do the Masters in Social



Work (Qualifying). And that's a statement, so it must have stimulated something that was laying dormant. (Educator)

The course was seen to **develop highly skilled and educated workers with a greater capacity and drive to address family violence in their communities.**

The ultimate outcome is a contribution to reducing and addressing the high rates of interpersonal violence and their effects in Aboriginal communities through contributing to the development of a skilled Aboriginal specialist workforce. Having worked in the violence field at national level, I don't know of any other Australian state or territory which has achieved anything of the magnitude of ECAV's work in this field of workforce development. The Grad Cert builds on this and contributes to the skilled and qualified workforce. (Educator)

Several stakeholders talked about the 'ripple effect' with families and communities of doing the Graduate Certificate and other courses in the pathway.

My daughter is doing the course now. I am the mother of six so and there's three of us who've participated in doing it. One daughter's been a stay-at-home mum and has done a lot of short ECAV courses and my older one has started the domestic violence one. (Graduate)

I think it inspires our kids to go on and get a better education so they can help people. (Graduate)

It's a ripple effect, so we become better teachers to our families and communities. (Educator)

Challenges

Course delivery staff commented that the prospect of undertaking a University course is often daunting for the students, and a lack of confidence in their own capacity to succeed leads some to want to withdraw before starting the course. University and ECAV staff say they often **have to work hard in early stages each year to retain students who experience a crisis of confidence.**

Preventing dropout before the course starts and during. Having an ECAV Aboriginal staff member actively chasing people up and encouraging them, talking through their concerns and supporting them makes a big difference. Also having an Aboriginal staff member who is actively engaged in the program at the University helps. (Educator)

Staff and former participants said that the high level of support continues throughout the course year, and is essential for retaining Aboriginal students and ensuring they continue, complete their assessments and graduate.



I didn't know if I wanted to do the Grad Cert – I was a bit nervous. But ECAV were involved and that was a key thing in my decision making. I knew ECAV would have put in good supports. (Graduate)

I knew the support would be there from ECAV. I've always advocated for ECAV training. I've been fortunate because the support was there. They're all committed to what they do and that makes all the difference. It's not just a job, it's their passion. (Graduate)

There was support from everyone. At different times and different days everyone had struggles and we were able to support each other through it. You could ring the others when you needed to. (Graduate)

There was quite a gap between the Advanced Diploma and the Grad Cert and I wasn't sure I could do it. But seeing the people I'd done the other courses with doing it, I thought, 'If they can do it, I can do it'. (Graduate)

It was a massive jump, but ECAV prepared us for it. The handouts were really important. Another good thing was they got someone to come in and help us with referencing. (Graduate)

We could contact the lecturer about anything – either by email or go and see them or ring them. (Graduate)

A few participants and staff members commented that **administrative hurdles sometimes unnecessarily complicated things for students**. For example, the University was said to require proof of Aboriginality or disability, which can be difficult for some Aboriginal people without the necessary documentation. Another hurdle in previous years was the payment of ABSTUDY assistance after the module, which made it difficult for some students to afford the week-long study blocks in Sydney. It was noted that this appears to have been resolved by the University.

As with the Advanced Diploma, a significant challenge for ECAV has been **the uncertainty of funding**, which has made it difficult to effectively plan and promote the course and ensure continuity from year to year. Of particular concern is the risk of being unable to sustain the course in its current format, with the successful formula of shared tuition and continuous support developed in conjunction with the University of Sydney.

Opportunities for improvement

Very little was identified in this evaluation in terms of areas for improvement. Teaching staff commented that they have very effective program review and continuous improvement strategies which routinely identify areas for improvement and that these tend to be addressed quickly. These include introduction of additional



time each module learning and refreshing research, study and referencing skills; securing the same teaching room for the whole course (rather than requiring students who are unfamiliar with the University to locate a new room each day); earlier introduction of students to the Koori Centre; organising for ABSTUDY to be paid ahead of the study block rather than after; and appointment by the University of an Aboriginal Course Coordinator.

One area for improvement identified by the University was to seek to bring students to the University during Orientation Week to give them a proper orientation to the University and all its facilities, introduce them the Koori Centre much earlier and to undertake a few introductory classes in academic writing, research and study skills.

Another area stakeholders identified for improvement was more efficiently overcoming administrative hurdles when students enrol, such as proof of Aboriginality or disability.

Delivery options were discussed with stakeholders, including the potential for online options. While a few saw the potential for some online support, participants and teaching staff agreed that it was important for the course to remain a face-to-face delivered program, due to the importance of participant interaction, the difficult past experiences in education of many of the participants, the challenging content, and the limited use the participants typically make of online resources. It was also reported that many Aboriginal workers have limited access to the internet outside of their workplace, which would make online delivery unfeasible for many.

One workplace manager commented that while graduates of the three-year pathway are deemed to have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, the graduates in this person's experience tended to require considerable supervision before they are able to perform at the same level as a Bachelor of Counselling graduate. This person felt it would be useful if the Graduate Certificate could address some of these gaps through an interpersonal counselling unit (such as understanding medical records, developing treatment plans, understanding different models of practice, understanding child development).

2.3 The ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway

2.3.1 Pathway participation and completion

Since 2001 when the Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault and Child Protection) was introduced, there have been 439 Aboriginal participants in one or more of the Pathway courses. The overall graduation rate across the three courses has been 66%.



The gender profile across the Pathway is predominantly female, with 86% of all participants being women (Table 19).

Table 19: Completions of an Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway course by sex, 2001-2017^{1,2}

	Males		Females		Persons	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	30	50	261	69	291	66
Statement of Attainment	15	25	71	19	86	20
Did not complete	15	25	47	12	62	14
Total	60 (14%)	100	379 (86%)	100	439 (100%)	100

¹Source: Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²The courses in the Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway include: Certificate IV Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault & Child Protection) (implemented since 2001); Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling (implemented since 2011); and Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) (implemented since 2013)

The age profile of Pathway course participants could not be concluded due to missing data relating to the age of a number of Certificate IV participants (Table 20).

Table 20: Completions of an Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway course by age, 2001-2017^{1,2,3,4}

	<40 years		40 years or over		Missing data		Persons	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	108	65	160	68	23	61	291	66
Statement of Attainment	35	21	41	18	10	26	86	20
Did not complete	24	14	33	14	5	13	62	14
Total	167 (38%)	100	234 (53%)	100	38 (9%)	100	439 (100%)	100

¹Source: Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²The courses in the Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway include: Certificate IV Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault & Child Protection) (implemented since 2001); Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling (implemented since 2011); and Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) (implemented since 2013)

³Age at time of enrolment

⁴Table based on incomplete data



Forty per cent of Pathway participants worked for NSW Health, while 60% worked for other organisations such as ACCHSs, NGOs and other government agencies (Table 21). Missing Certificate IV data meant that it was not possible to distinguish between ACCHS staff and other employers.

Table 21: Completions of an Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway course by employer, 2001-2017^{1,2,3}

	NSW Health		Other		All employers	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	121	70	170	64	291	66
Statement of Attainment	33	19	53	20	86	20
Did not complete	20	11	42	16	62	14
Total	174 (40%)	100	265 (60%)	100	439 (100%)	100

¹Source: Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²The courses in the Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway include: Certificate IV Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault & Child Protection) (implemented since 2001); Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling (implemented since 2011); and Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) (implemented since 2013)

³Employer at time of enrolment

The majority (59%) of Pathway participants came from regional or rural areas, one-third (34%) came from Sydney and 7% came from interstate (Table 22).

Table 22: Completions of an Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway course by region of employment, 2001-2016^{1,2,3}

	Greater Sydney		Regional or rural NSW		Interstate		All persons	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	106	71	163	63	22	71	291	66
Statement of Attainment	30	20	51	20	5	16	86	20
Did not complete	14	9	44	17	4	13	62	14
Total	150 (34%)	100	258 (59%)	100	31 (7%)	100	439 (100%)	100

¹Source: Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²The courses in the Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway include: Certificate IV Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault & Child Protection) (implemented since 2001); Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling (implemented since 2011); and Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) (implemented since 2013)

³ Region of employment at time of enrolment

Just under a quarter (22%) of Pathway participants were AFHWs at the time they commenced a course (Table 23).

**Table 23: Completions of an Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway course by position, 2001-2016^{1,2,3}**

	AFHW		Other		All positions	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduated	67	69	224	65	291	66
Statement of Attainment	17	18	69	20	86	20
Did not complete	13	13	49	15	62	14
Total	97 (22%)	100	342 (78%)	100	439 (100%)	100

¹Source: Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway program monitoring data, NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

²The courses in the Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway include: Certificate IV Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault & Child Protection) (implemented since 2001); Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling (implemented since 2011); and Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) (implemented since 2013)

³ Position at time of enrolment

The unit of measurement here is course candidates rather than individuals, noting that any one individual may have been a course candidate for one, two or all three of the courses in the Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway.

The data above (Tables 19-23) generally show that there is little difference amongst course candidates who graduated by sex, age, employer, region of employment and position. For good measure, significance testing was undertaken (using a z-test) to determine whether the small apparent differences were statistically significant³⁵. These tests (the results of which are set out in Appendix C) generally confirmed that there were no meaningful differences between the proportions of the Pathway course graduations by subgroups. The one exception is that there is an observed and statistically significant difference between males and females. Female candidates (69%) were more likely than male candidates (50%) to be awarded a full qualification following an attempt at one of the three courses ($p=.0084$).

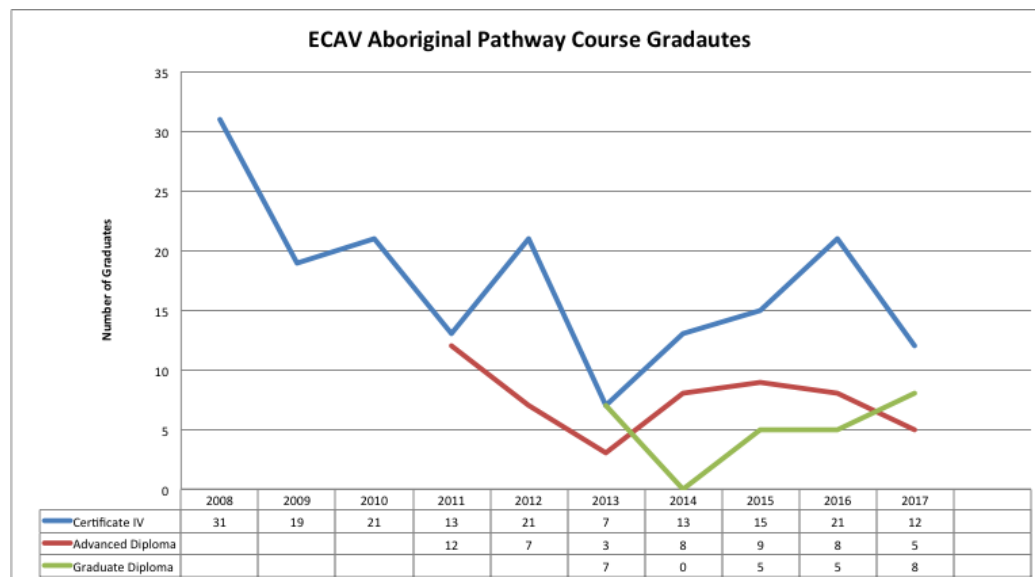
Generally speaking, however, outcomes in terms of receiving a full qualification or Statement of Attainment do not appear to differ greatly for people of different ages, different job roles, different employers or from different geographic areas.

The annual graduate numbers do appear to relate to the number that graduated in the tier below in previous years. Figure 3 plots graduate numbers over 10 years across the three Pathway courses and shows that when graduate numbers dip for the

³⁵ It is debatable whether it is appropriate to apply tests of statistical difference to these data. The data relate to the entire population of course candidates between 2001 and 2017 and not a sample. Tests of statistical difference are generally applied to account for sampling error which is not a factor with population data. However, if the data set is to be considered as representative of the future cohort of candidates, it may be appropriate to test for statistical difference, as has been done here for good measure.

Certificate IV, this tends to have a ripple effect on graduate numbers in the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate.

Figure 3: Number of graduates in Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway courses, 2008-2017



There has been a moderate transition up the tiers of the Pathway. It is not possible with de-identified data to track the transition rate precisely, however the data suggest that over half (56%) of those who graduated from the Certificate IV from 2010 onwards (the first ‘feeder’ year for the Advanced Diploma) went on to do the Advanced Diploma. In total about one-third (32%) of Certificate IV graduates since 2001 have enrolled in the Advanced Diploma. Just over half (56%) of all Advanced Diploma graduates have gone on to enrol in the Graduate Certificate.

2.3.2 Accreditation and recognition

In 2015, the MoH recognised the three-year Pathway as having the equivalence of a bachelor degree and that graduates are able to access the Aboriginal Health Education Officer – Graduate Classification salary grade.

In 2017 the ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway won the Education and Training Award in the Western Sydney Local Health District Quality Awards. The Pathway also won a Silver Award in the 2017 Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards.

Two recent developments in the Justice portfolio have the potential to impact recognition of the ECAV Pathway qualifications and expand the range of roles graduates of the Pathway may be eligible to apply for. In June 2018 the *Victims Rights and Support Act 2013* was amended to extend the qualification requirements for applicants to the approved counselling scheme. The NSW Commissioner of Victims Rights confirmed that the amendment, when finalised, would allow the Department



of Justice to consider ECAV Pathway graduates to apply for Victims Counsellor roles. A similar discretion is also currently being examined in relation to Witness Intermediary roles under proposed changes to the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* to support the rollout of Child Sexual Offence Evidence Reforms in 2019. If passed, these amendments will open up to ECAV Pathway graduates important opportunities to work in the area of family violence, sexual assault and child protection outside the health portfolio³⁶.

2.3.3 Stakeholder perspectives

Strengths and significance of the Pathway

A prevailing view amongst the stakeholders who contributed to this evaluation was that the Aboriginal Qualification Pathway is unique in terms of training an Aboriginal family violence, sexual assault and child protection workforce, but also provides an excellent model for Aboriginal education and training more broadly.

A key strength was seen to be that **the courses are founded upon Aboriginal concepts of healing and Aboriginal culture**. The Aboriginal Healing Framework, which forms the centrepiece of the Advanced Diploma, approaches trauma and healing from an Aboriginal perspective that, based on written feedback from students, makes sense to them in a way that Western frameworks may not.

One of the differences between our pathway and the University is our program is holistic. It doesn't just look at the academic needs of the students but also looks after the needs of the family, the spirituality while they're there, they're belief system and where they come from in terms of their land. And we talk about this oneness all the time, and people do become one, blood sweat and tears going into that room, and everyone gels, and that's what the difference is.
(ACMAG Member)

The Pathway was thought to differ from other mainstream education and training programs in that it **allows participants to learn and develop skills within a culturally safe space**. The courses address the social determinants of health and incorporate Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal healing. Cultural safety is emphasised throughout the program.

It is a fantastic pathway and is just so supported and so well structured and well delivered. I didn't find anything difficult just the small challenges and there were always ways to get you through. It was such a supported learning process and I know myself at times I am not as confident as I probably could be but I know having connection to the trainers and the supervisors has strengthened my

³⁶ Email from M. Krishna to L. McNamara 9/7/18.



result because I could get through it and complete it and to do it well not just pass through it. (Graduate)

The fact that **the courses involve Aboriginal people in the design, development and delivery of the training** was seen as an important strength. The Certificate IV and Advanced Diploma have been designed primarily by Aboriginal staff at ECAV, and Aboriginal staff are integrally involved in delivery of training, assessment and clinical supervision of students. The courses are closely connected to Aboriginal communities through the formal and informal roles played by ACMAG members and the active role played by Aboriginal staff members and trainers.

The **model of delivery was thought to be flexible, supports different learning requirements and capacities, and accounts for experiences of Aboriginal people** with regards to responsibilities to family and community. The courses **focus on, and are structured around, trauma**, and acknowledge that every worker, family and community has been influenced in some way by Aboriginal family and/or domestic violence. As one manager put it:

These are traumatised workers, working with traumatised clients, in traumatised communities. (Manager)

Stakeholders pointed to the **high completion rates** of Pathway courses, in contrast to Aboriginal education and vocational training more broadly, as a key indicator of success.

The courses were seen to provide a high level of **positive reinforcement of student achievement**, such as constructive feedback on assessments, provision of reassurance, and culminating in the annual graduation ceremony and prize giving for outstanding achievement, a formal event attended by many dignitaries, graduates and their families.

It was pointed out by stakeholders that there is a **high level of employment** amongst graduates of the pathway, and enhanced opportunities for career progression as established by Gander and Ng (2015), who noted that nearly all Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate graduates were in the workforce with a substantial number working for NSW Health service providers.³⁷

The Pathway was seen to **facilitate a conduit to tertiary education for Aboriginal students** who have a very low university participation rate. Vocational education and training (VET) is traditionally not a strong pathway for students into higher education, and Indigenous students are half as likely as non-Indigenous students to

³⁷ Gander and Ng, op. cit. p.13.



make the transition from VET training to university.³⁸ The Aboriginal Qualification Pathway aims to progressively build students' confidence to take on the next stage through intensive scaffolding.

ECAV was seen to have developed a reputation in the field for delivery of high quality, needs-focused and culturally safe education and training in this space. It was thought the organisation has built considerable trust and respect within Aboriginal communities, with the MoH and with its partners, including the University of Sydney, and that ECAV continues to demonstrate its commitment to Aboriginal communities in many ways, including participation in ACMAG, development of culturally relevant programs (such as the Strong Aboriginal Men and Strong Aboriginal Women programs), employment of Aboriginal staff and nurturing their careers, and instigation of the Aboriginal Professional Development Circles initiative.

A further strength was thought to be that **the courses are meeting industry needs and filling skills gaps.** Comments included:

The reason why these courses have such a high completion rate is because its not just all the wonderful learning they're getting, it's meeting industry needs. There's a lot of work that goes into making this a course that does have such a high completion rate, by knowing our people, by knowing the students that come into that room, how do we support that room and create safety through that learning, how do the trainers maintain that. It's a lot more than just being an academic institution because we know through research and everything we know that that wont work. If we don't meet those other needs, Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal people in those workforces will not go through an academic process. So we've have to think carefully about the way we've developed this course to capture and make that a safe learning environment. That's why were getting those people into University, and they may never access University in their life if we didn't create this unique and careful pathway. (ACMAG Member)

Better writing skills, communication skills, analysis skills; greater engagement of the community; better understanding of family violence; working through own personal issues that makes them stronger and more effective to clients and the community; comprehension and knowledge; pride. What we've seen with many Aboriginal workers doing this pathway is that they have internalised racism, and they unpack this through doing the courses. They go through this journey,

³⁸ Wilks, J. and Wilson, K. (2015) A profile of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education student population, *Australian Universities Review*, Vol 57, No 2.



they embrace their family and culture and that helps them to stay strong for their communities. They're fantastic in their workplaces. (Manager)

According to some stakeholders, **the Pathway has had a transformational impact on some participants' lives**, an impact that has then impacted on their families. One participant described the impact of completing the Pathway as follows:

The impact the pathway has had on my life has been life changing, from leaving school in Year 11 and having the experiences that I had that it led me to a point where I went into a service that linked me in to ECAV courses, and from there linked me into the Cert IV with little work experience – a lot of life experience - and then going to the Advanced Diploma, and then being employed by ECAV to help facilitate the Cert IV. So you could see the massive growth, the massive learning, the massive journey that has taken place, and it's not just happened academically for me – I mean yes, I now have language that I once didn't have – but I have an understanding of things that have happened, why they happened, that it's not me that caused that to happen, so there's freedom in a lot of the things that we learn because it frees us from things that sits with us so it's true. And that has definitely reflected in my children: I have a 20 year old who's going to University who says that if she hadn't seen me studying, then she may not have done what she's doing. It's a complete turnaround in the narrative of what my life could have been 11 years ago. The learning that I've taken on and reflected back into my children and community and now into other participants in the classroom. It's been a life saving influence on me. (Graduate/Educator)

Another educator also described this transformative effect:

As someone who watches these people go through that pathway, how they start in that room, the level of nervousness and the knowledge, what they're experiencing in their communities and their workplaces. By the time they go through that pathway, not only have they made amazing changes within their own lives, academically and physically, but this then spreads to their families, their communities and their workplaces. And the joy we get from watching that, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else, that's how much job satisfaction there is, because you know that every one of those students you watch change and you know they're going to take that change out and it's going to have a ripple effect. (ECAV Educator)

Finally, a number of stakeholders commented on what it would mean should the ECAV Pathway courses cease. The main impact identified was that there would be a significant gap in the training pathway for AFHWs and other Aboriginal people working in the area of family violence, sexual assault and trauma which would make



it difficult for the NSW Government to deliver on the Aboriginal Family Health Strategy, Keep Them Safe outcomes, the Premier's Priorities on domestic violence perpetrators and children at risk of significant harm,³⁹ and emerging commitments and priorities from the response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Furthermore, it was suggested that withdrawing funding from the qualifications would send a message to the Aboriginal community that the MoH does not value them and is not serious about developing the capacity of the Aboriginal workforce.

³⁹ NSW Premier's Priorities, December 2017 <https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/premiers-priorities/>



3. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Key evaluation questions

3.1.1 Are the courses meeting their intended objectives?

The Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) were developed in order to fill skill and qualification gaps of Aboriginal Family Health Workers employed under the NSW Aboriginal Family Health Strategy and to increase the capacity of the NSW Health workforce to address Aboriginal family violence, sexual assault and child abuse and neglect.

At the time of writing, the ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway had graduated 291 Aboriginal people across the three courses. Over seven years, 52 Aboriginal people graduated with the Advanced Diploma, and over three years 29 graduated with the Graduate Certificate. One person has gone on to obtain the Master of Social Work (Qualifying). 12 AFHWs have completed the Advanced Diploma and seven have completed the Graduate Certificate.

Stakeholders expressed strong support for the courses and their role in developing competent, knowledgeable and skilled workers. Stakeholders also held in high regard the delivery of the courses by ECAV and the University of Sydney. All Aboriginal graduates interviewed for this project, without exception, endorsed the courses for their academic rigour, relevance to their work, and culturally appropriate delivery. A number of graduates perceived that undertaking the ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway courses has led to promotion, salary increase, change of job or role, improved practice and performance, better professional engagement with their communities, improved teamwork and increased job satisfaction. For participants, undertaking the courses has reportedly resulted in increased self-confidence, improved relationships with family and community, further study, and engagement in education and training (including the ECAV Pathway) for the members of the next generation of some participants' families.

But the participants and graduates are not the only ones to have benefitted. Service managers described the benefits to their organisations that have flowed from workers undertaking the Advanced Diploma and/or the Graduate Certificate. These include improved ability to recruit and retain Aboriginal staff, improved engagement with and retention of Aboriginal families and communities, and increased cultural competence of the organisation. This finding echoes those of the 2014 New Street



services evaluation which found that, with the recruitment and training of new Aboriginal staff, seven times as many new Aboriginal cases entered the service.⁴⁰

It should also be acknowledged that as well as meeting their own objectives, the courses are achieving retention and graduation rates for Aboriginal students that are significantly higher than for Aboriginal students more broadly in further education, and provide a model for the effective delivery of education and training to Aboriginal people that can only assist the Government in meeting its Aboriginal education and employment commitments. It is important to be reminded that Aboriginal participation, retention and completion rates are still well below those of non-Aboriginal students in both the VET⁴¹ and higher education sectors⁴². Aboriginal people are far more likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to be enrolled in a lower-level VET course (Certificate I-III), are less likely to complete a higher level VET course, and are far less likely to enrol in a University course. Nationally, for those who do go to University, the dropout rate for Indigenous students within the first year is twice that of non-Indigenous students, while the Indigenous University completion rate is around 40%, compared to about 69% for non-Indigenous students⁴³. When we consider the graduation rate for the Graduate Certificate is 87%, and for the Advanced Diploma 76%, these programs are clearly bucking the trend in Indigenous education and training.

As an overarching goal of the Pathway is to expand and strengthen the Aboriginal workforce to specifically address family violence, sexual assault and child protection in Aboriginal communities, it would be useful to understand to what extent this has occurred, to what extent Aboriginal staff have been retained in their positions, and to what extent their work has led to more Aboriginal people accessing family violence services. These issues were beyond the scope of this evaluation, but may be useful to explore in future research.

3.1.2 How are the qualifications delivered and monitored, and what are the implementation barriers and enablers?

Both courses are delivered in face-to-face intensive block study mode. At present, no use is made of online delivery approaches, nor are there any plans to do so. The consensus of stakeholders was that the nature of the course material and teaching approach, as well as limited reliable online access and use by the participants, make

⁴⁰ KPMG (2014) *Evaluation of New Street Adolescent Services – Final Report*, NSW Kids and Families, Sydney, p. 49.

⁴¹ Windley, G. (2017) *Indigenous VET participation, completion and outcomes: change over the past decade*, NCVET, Adelaide

⁴² Behrendt, L., Larkin, S., Griew, R. and Kelly, P. (2012) *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report*. Panel of the Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, Australian Government, Canberra

⁴³ *Ibid*, pp. 7-8.



online delivery of modules unrealistic (although support and reinforcement of the course through online means was supported).

Each course has established monitoring and continuous improvement systems that effectively review and update the programs. These systems include external setting and monitoring of standards and competencies (ASQA and AQF); collection of student feedback; regular review meetings between course delivery staff and ECAV management; oversight, reporting to and input from ACMAG; review by external agencies (eg ASQA, ACA); conduct of external reviews/evaluations (e.g. by NGO Consulting Group in 2015); and routine reporting to MoH and the University of Sydney. Graduates have not been routinely followed up to track career progress, although informally ECAV staff know what many former students have gone on to do after completing their course.

There have been a number of enablers to implementation. These include:

- The degree of cultural safety provided to students, where they feel supported and safe in the classroom and with their peers.
- The high quality of teaching by ECAV and University of Sydney educators
- The relevance and currency of the courses for the Aboriginal Family Health workforce and communities
- The significant level of staff support given to students to promote retention and completion
- ECAV's strong reputation in the sector and with Aboriginal communities in providing training in domestic and family violence issues and training of Aboriginal workers
- Provision of a positive and supported introduction to university or other qualifications.

There have also been some barriers to implementation, and these can be divided into two types. Firstly there are the systemic barriers. These include:

- *Inconsistent support from workplace managers.* While some participants are clearly well supported by their workplaces to undertake the courses, others are not. And it is unknown how many Aboriginal people do not enrol because they do not have the support of their managers. Support has a number of facets, including financial support for travel and accommodation, support by releasing the worker to attend study blocks or granting study leave, workload support around expectations about 'catching up' on work; and personal support by recognising the emotional load of the courses and supporting them through this. AFHWs are supported by their position guidelines that require managers to attend to their professional development needs and "implement a program of continuing professional development to ensure



skills and competencies are maintained and enhanced”⁴⁴. However other workers, within NSW Health or in ACCHSs, NGOs and other agencies, are often not covered by such guidelines.

- *Instability of funding.* The Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate, unlike the Certificate IV (which is recurrently funded) have received non-recurrent project funding paid to WSLHD, and is calculated each year. Bearing in mind that project funding is allocated July-June, but that the courses run according to the calendar year, ECAV must negotiate each year with WSLHD to have the funds roll over to the next year. Furthermore, not knowing whether the courses will be re-funded from one year to the next has limited the ability to strategically plan for the Pathway courses, e.g exploring recruitment and funding options with other departments.
- *Difficulties in accessing ABSTUDY.* Students in the Graduate Certificate have experienced few difficulties in accessing ABSTUDY Away from Base support because their applications are assisted by the University of Sydney. However, participants in the Advanced Diploma have experienced difficulties because they have to apply through their local Centrelink offices, where assessment of applications is reportedly inconsistent.

The other category of barrier concerns personal issues that place participants at risk of non-completion, or of not enrolling in the first place. These are:

- *Fear of failure.* The lack of confidence and fear felt by many Aboriginal people who have left school early, had negative experiences in education, and whose lives have been characterised by significant experiences of trauma, disadvantage and racism are well documented. Many of those who have undertaken these courses had to be convinced by the course convenors that they were up to it, and throughout their studies, many have continued to experience crises of confidence, a key reason ECAV continues to provide high levels of personal support to participants.
- *Personal resource limitations.* There are many reasons someone who is eligible to enrol in either of these courses might not do so, and some of these reasons are about personal resources. Inability to fund their studies (particularly if unable to secure workplace or ABSTUDY support) and competing demands on their time from work and family are the two main resource factors limiting people’s capacity to participate.
- *Underdeveloped research and study skills.* Many participants in the Graduate Certificate are challenged by the academic requirements of library research and referencing. For most, these skills are new and must be learned. In response to the difficulties students were experiencing, the University of Sydney has increased the focus on developing these skills during the program.

⁴⁴ NSW Ministry of Health Aboriginal Family Health Worker Operational Guidelines, p8.



3.1.3 What is the reach of these qualifications and their impact on building the capacity of Aboriginal health staff to respond effectively and in a culturally competent way to family violence, abuse and neglect in Aboriginal communities?

Some 439 Aboriginal participants have undertaken Pathway courses since 2001, of which 291 (66%) have graduated. Since 2010 (the first feeder year for the Advanced Diploma), just over half of Certificate IV graduates (56%) went on to do the Advanced Diploma, and the same proportion of Advanced Diploma graduates went on to do the Graduate Certificate. Between 2011 and 2017, 69 people participated in the Advanced Diploma, of which 52 (76%) graduated and a further 14 (20%) received a Statement of Attainment (it should be noted that a Statement of Attainment is an achievement in itself, given the educational disadvantages many Aboriginal people face and the prevalence of negative prior experiences in education). Between 2013-17, 29 people undertook the Graduate Certificate, of which 25 (87%) graduated.

The demographics of the participants in both courses reflect the broader characteristics of the Aboriginal workforce in the area of family violence: predominantly female, mid-career and over 40 years of age. Around half of Advanced Diploma participants and two-thirds of Graduate Certificate participants were from regional or rural NSW. And the participants in both courses were drawn fairly equally from NSW Health, ACCHSs and other organisations (NGOs and other government agencies).

There is only one demographic factor that appears to affect completion and graduation from courses across the Pathway (including the Certificate IV), and that is gender. While we cannot determine whether or not males are less likely to graduate specifically from the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate (the numbers are too small for this analysis to be valid), across the three-tiered Pathway, males were less likely to graduate than females (50% compared with 69%). Some factors that could be considered to better understand this are the appeal the programs currently have for men; whether stronger strategies for retaining men in the courses are required; and the broader demographic of the family and domestic violence workforce, which tends to be predominantly female.

Apart from gender, no other demographic factor was a predictor of completion or non-completion. In other words, a person's age, where they live, where they work, or what they do, made no difference to whether they were likely to graduate the programs or Pathway. This suggests that the Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway is suitable and achievable for a broad range of people.

There has also been fairly good take up of the Advanced Diploma by AFHWs. There are currently 25 AFHW positions in NSW, and we know that 12 AFHWs have



completed the Advanced Diploma. One-fifth of Advanced Diploma participants and have been AFHWs.

The uptake of the Graduate Certificate has been slower in general, though seven AFHWs have been awarded the qualification, representing a quarter of all graduating students. Overall 38% of participants and graduates were employed by NSW Health. There are a few reasons that help to explain the slower uptake, most notably that the Advanced Diploma was intended, and is viewed, as a practical skill-based qualification that fills a gap in the skill base of AFHWs, whereas the Graduate Certificate has a more theory-based orientation.

Feedback from graduates and workplace managers strongly affirmed the value of both courses in developing the skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to supporting Aboriginal people around family violence, sexual assault and child protection issues. The Advanced Diploma is credited by a variety of stakeholders for its role in developing practical counselling skills within an Aboriginal framework and world view, which makes it unlike other counselling courses currently available. The quality and relevance of the course has resulted in it being accredited by the Australian Counselling Association, and reaccredited for a second term by ASQA. Stakeholders saw the value of the Graduate Diploma in the way it equips participants with the knowledge and understanding that underpins family violence in Aboriginal communities and a language to use in their work, and provides a bridge to further University study. But the outcomes have not only been for individuals: there is some evidence that these courses have, through an expanded and enhanced Aboriginal workforce, enabled organisations to better engage Aboriginal families and communities around issues of family violence, sexual assault and child protection.

3.1.4 How could the training be improved?

Both courses have adequate formal and informal monitoring and continuous improvement processes for identifying areas that could be improved and developing appropriate responses for addressing these. These include regular participant feedback, review meetings after each module, biannual meetings between ECAV and University of Sydney staff, cultural supervision of non-Aboriginal ECAV staff, and participation of Aboriginal staff in a twice-yearly Professional Development Circle. Several examples were provided of improvements that have been made to both the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate.

Some potential improvements were identified by a few past participants, but most of these issues have already been addressed through the continuous improvement strategies. Nevertheless, the evaluation has identified some improvements that could enhance the reach and implementation of the courses.

Reach and promotion



Whilst 98 Aboriginal people have participated in the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate, there appear to be some untapped (or only partially tapped) sources from which to draw future participants. ECAV and the University of Sydney have indicated they can accommodate up to around 25 in each cohort.

Firstly, whilst a number of AFHWs have completed the Advanced Diploma, many have not (to date 12 AFHWs have completed, and there are currently 25 AFHW positions). Bearing in mind that the course was developed to fill a skills gap for AFHWs, it could reasonably be expected that all AFHWs complete the Advanced Diploma (in addition to the Certificate IV). Indeed, the argument has been made for making the Advanced Diploma compulsory for AFHWs. New Street has already taken this step for its Aboriginal counselling staff, having made the Advanced Diploma mandatory. Giving the course mandatory status for AFHWs may also help some Aboriginal workers who encounter resistance from their managers.

Secondly, it stands to reason that the more who enter at the Certificate IV level, the more should continue to the Advanced Diploma and then on to the Graduate Certificate and Master of Social Work (Qualifying). More than 200 people have graduated from the Certificate IV since 2001. Currently ECAV is planning to increase participation in the Certificate IV by scheduling two courses in 2019 (Central Coast and Sydney). If ECAV can continue to increase the number enrolling in and graduating from the Certificate IV there is potential for significantly increasing the number of people enrolling in the Advanced Diploma. It should be noted that this was also one of the recommendations of the Gander and Ng evaluation of the Pathway⁴⁵.

There are both positive and negative impacts of providing the courses only in Sydney. On one hand, a number of regional participants say they enjoy coming to Sydney for block study because it allows them to concentrate on study without the distractions of work, community and family, and it grows their networks. On the other hand, some regional participants, and potentially others who have chosen not to enrol because of their inability to leave work and family, have experienced difficulty attending block study in Sydney. Consideration could be given to delivering the Advanced Diploma in a regional location, e.g. every second year, or on a request basis. It is less likely that the Graduate Certificate would benefit from regional delivery, however, given that considerable strength comes from locating the course within the University of Sydney, giving students a real University experience.

It would also be worthwhile to look further than health organisations for participants. Particularly considering the whole-of-government approach being promoted to address domestic and family violence, it is likely there is untapped

⁴⁵ Gander and Ng, op. cit., p.12



demand for the Pathway courses across NSW Health Aboriginal workforces including AMIHS teams and a range of sectors and agencies including FACS and the Department of Justice. However promoting to these agencies would require resources, some stability in funding to ensure the courses continue to be offered, and negotiation at a departmental level to develop a mutually agreeable payment arrangement (eg fee-for-service or project funding from the agencies involved).

Finally, the lower rates of both enrolment and completion by males in the Graduate Certificate should be further examined, in order to determine whether this is an aberration, or a reflection of the broader profile of the sector, or whether there are aspects to the learning experience that causes some male participants to drop out. It should be noted that the need to expand the Aboriginal male workforce in the family violence and trauma sector has previously been identified as a need⁴⁶.

Participant support

The evaluation has highlighted the need for more work to be done with workplace managers in order to secure greater support for participants wishing to undertake Pathway courses. The supports that are particularly helpful are: release to attend study blocks; financial support for travel and accommodation; and general encouragement and understanding for what is often an emotionally taxing, but ultimately rewarding professional development opportunity. An example of how positive support can be provided is presented in the New Street case study⁴⁷ (see box).

⁴⁶ CIRCA 2015 op cit, p. 41.

⁴⁷ Case study prepared from stakeholder interview.



Employer support case study: New Street

New Street provides therapeutic services for children and young people aged 10 to 17 years who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviours towards others and operates from four locations state-wide.

Over the past few years New Street has actively recruited Aboriginal staff to the service, in part to address the previous low rate of retention of Aboriginal clients. The organisation has made the Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Wellbeing and Violence Prevention Work mandatory for Aboriginal staff, and the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling is recommended. The organisation strongly encourages staff to undertake the ECAV Aboriginal qualification pathway courses. As a Manager in one service said, *“We have employed people who are already social workers, but we still require them to do the Cert IV or Advanced Diploma because those courses really target our core work”*. The service provides support to participants in a number of ways:

- Participants doing the Certificate IV, Advanced Diploma or Graduate Certificate courses are considered to be on a training pathway, which means they are undertaken on duty time. Participants do not have to take study or personal leave to undertake the courses. The participant’s workload is absorbed by other staff members, rather than the participant being expected to catch up on their return. The participant is also able to take time during work hours to do required reading and complete assignments.
- Travel and accommodation expenses are paid for by the service.
- The service has a large team of counsellors, social workers and psychologists who can provide assistance and advice to participants when needed.

The organisation has also worked at addressing cultural safety of the organisation as a whole. All non-Aboriginal staff are required to undertake ECAV’s three day *Journey of Survival* cultural competence training. The organisation has formal and informal cultural consultation structures in place at the individual, team and organisational levels.

The result has been an improvement in recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff, increased engagement with and retention of Aboriginal families in the service.

The courses have assisted us with recruitment because we’ve been able to recruit Aboriginal staff and part of the recruitment is the expectation that they will undertake one or more of the ECAV pathway courses. So it’s an incentive [to join the organisation] because we fully support them through the program. (Manager)



Some strategies for improving the support provided by workplace managers to course participants could include:

- Continuing the practice of ECAV and the clinical supervisor meeting with each participant's workplace manager to discuss what they can expect and how they can support the participant. At this meeting the manager could be provided with a copy of the competencies/learning outcomes and the discussion could look at ways the participant's work could align with their studies.
- Encouraging managers to undertake cultural competency training.
- ECAV and MoH could further promote the *Developing culturally safe trauma informed practice in Aboriginal communities* course (a one-day adaptation of the *Competent Responses to Aboriginal Family and Sexual Violence* course) aimed at managers.
- Consideration of a governance structure which guides Managers to enable their staff to attend study blocks and participate in their professional development, for example, similar or complementary to position guidelines provided for AFHWs for Managers to support their professional development.

Another important form of support for participants in both courses is ABSTUDY, however a number of students in the Advanced Diploma have experienced difficulties in accessing Away from Base support, and it was suggested this is because applications are being assessed inconsistently by regional Centrelink offices. Gander and Ng (2015) recommended that ECAV manage ABSTUDY group applications. This move is likely to provide greater consistency, as well as enable ECAV to efficiently undertake tasks such as travel and accommodation bookings, obtain group discounts and ensure participants receive their allowances prior to each module. However ECAV would require funding for a part time administrative officer and up-front payments that would be later reimbursed by ABSTUDY.

Monitoring participant outcomes

It would be useful to be able to track participant outcomes, in particular career progression post-completion, through more systematic follow-up and recording of participant outcomes (e.g. whether they had changed job, changed role, gained a promotion, increased work hours etc). This would provide further evidence of effectiveness for the programs going forward.

Providing greater funding stability

While the courses can continue to be delivered with the allocation of one-off annual project funding (providing levels of funding are maintained), a longer term funding mechanism would have the potential to enhance both courses by providing stability that would enable ECAV to strategically plan around the Pathway, promote the



courses more broadly, develop a combined support unit with stable staffing across the Pathway courses, plan staffing effectively and plan regional delivery (if desired). The current funding approach also presents difficulties around quarantining of and gaining access to rolled-over funds from the LHD. Options for future funding mechanisms are discussed further in Section 3.1.5.

3.1.5 What are the costs of implementing the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)?

The costs of delivering the courses are set out in Section 2. MoH funding covers about half of the cost, the remainder coming out of ECAV's operational budget. In essence, ECAV subsidises the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate through the other courses it offers across all its portfolios. Costs that are not covered by MoH funding include the significant costs associated with RTO compliance, program governance and management, promotion, IT support, administrative support, development of course materials, printing, professional development of trainers, cultural supervision of staff, librarian support and research to ensure the courses reflect best practice and readings are relevant and updated.

A key issue concerns how the courses should be funded in the future. The main options to fund the courses are fee-for-service, non-recurrent project funding (the present mechanism), recurrent funding, block funding (over several years) and organisational co-funding. The pros and cons of each of these options are summarised in Table 24.

In order to facilitate improved program planning and to commit to increasing the number of participants through the Pathway, the optimal solution would be to recurrently fund both the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate.

Another option, albeit somewhat less desirable from a planning and continuity perspective, would be a commitment from the MoH to block fund the programs over several years. This approach would provide stability for a defined number of years, though of course the level of stability would decrease the closer it got to the funding 'end date'. The issues around WSLHD management of funds for the courses should also be addressed in future funding arrangements.

A co-funded model could be an option to work towards in the future, but this would take time for the MoH to negotiate such partnerships at a fairly high departmental level. Nevertheless, the potential for such partnerships exist: these courses are already being sought out by workers from other departments such as FACS, Justice and Justice Health. With greater promotion and strategic partnerships, there is every



likelihood that co-funding might be sourced from other departments and key linked initiatives.

Table 24: Possible funding options for the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate

Option	Pros	Cons
<p>Fee for service Each participant is charged a fee that represents a proportion of the actual cost</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliance on MoH funding reduced • Other agencies would pay actual cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May result in decrease in participation as other agencies, particularly in NGO and ACCHS sectors may not be willing to pay • Individuals may not be able to afford • Funding decisions would rest with individual managers • Risk of cancellation if enrolments insufficient
<p>Non-recurrent project funding The present model – MoH calculates funding levels each year and allocates to WSLHD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoH has discretion to vary funding amounts • Courses can continue as they are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to plan programs • Strategic partnerships less likely with other agencies • Administratively complicated and time consuming • Risk to staff retention
<p>Recurrent funding Recurrent funding levels are negotiated with ECAV and ongoing funding allocated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists strategic planning and expansion • Assists staffing and retention • Provides a firm basis from which to forge partnerships with other agencies (and potentially co-funding opportunities) • Secures training pathway for workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant MoH financial commitment
<p>Block funding Funding is provided for multiple years but not necessarily recurrent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists strategic planning and expansion for a longer period of time compared with non-recurrent funding model • Assists staffing and retention for a longer period of time • More security for training pathways • MoH has discretion to vary funding amounts after block funding period ends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant MoH financial commitment • Lack of certainty beyond funding period



Option	Pros	Cons
Co-funded model MoH negotiates with other agencies to co-fund the courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding burden is shared• Other agencies send participants to the courses• More trained Aboriginal workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Likely to take time and high-level discussions between MoH and other agencies

The current fee structure sees cost recovery of a maximum of \$1,500 for each course. This obviously represents a fraction of the actual cost of providing the courses. Discussion with other departments needs to include discussion of a fair fee structure that better reflects the cost of delivery.



3.2 Conclusion

The Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma) represent significant achievements in the development of vocational training and higher education models. It is clear that in many areas the courses have had significant achievements – from involvement of the Aboriginal community in their development, delivery and management; a focus on cultural safety; workforce relevance; scaffolding of participants’ learning experiences; provision of support to students who have high levels of need stemming from a lifetime of disadvantage and trauma; high completion and graduation rates that far exceed the norm for Aboriginal education and training; high levels of participant satisfaction; significant professional and personal outcomes for graduates; external auditing and recognition; transparent and effective monitoring and review processes; to consistent and high praise from the Aboriginal community, workplace managers and relevant professional organisations. It is a significant result in an evaluation that every one of 45 stakeholders consulted felt the courses were highly worthwhile, contributed much to the sector, and should continue to be supported by the MoH. Any consideration of the future of the courses needs to take into account the ECAV’s reputation in the sector for offering highly respected education and training courses and entertaining the trust of the Aboriginal community.

However there is also room for improvement. The nature of the improvements relate more to the systems and structures that support the courses, than with the courses themselves. The following implications for practice are offered for consideration in the areas of reach and promotion, participant support, further skills development and funding.

3.3 Implications

3.2.1 Reach and promotion

- i. MoH (CAH and PARVAN) should consider making the Advanced Diploma mandatory for AFHWs and encourage graduates to undertake the Graduate Certificate.
- ii. ECAV should strengthen existing efforts to promote the Pathway to all new and prospective Certificate IV participants.
- iii. ECAV and the University of Sydney should explore ways in which to improve recruitment and retention of male participants.



- iv. ECAV should consider options for delivering the Advanced Diploma in regional locations.
- v. MoH should consider engaging in discussions with agencies such as FACS (Community Services and Housing NSW), the Department of Justice (including Corrective Services), NSW Police, the Department of Education (Connected Communities) and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss how the Pathway can be expanded and courses could be promoted to their Aboriginal staff. These negotiations should investigate options for setting up co-funded organisational fee for service funding arrangements.

Monitoring

- vi. ECAV should consider how monitoring of the employment and education outcomes of participants could be routinely undertaken.

Participant support

- vii. ECAV and clinical supervisors should consider strengthening engagement with workplace managers of participants in the Advanced Diploma to discuss support needs.
- viii. Consideration of a governance structure which guides Managers to enable their staff to attend study blocks and participate in their professional development, for example, similar or complementary to position guidelines provided for AFHWs for Managers to support their professional development.
- ix. ECAV and MoH should consider strengthening promotion to managers of the one-day *Developing culturally safe trauma informed practice in Aboriginal communities* course.
- x. ECAV and MoH should identify opportunities to promote support strategies to managers including promoting specialist training
- xi. ECAV should progress management of ABSTUDY group applications for the Advanced Diploma

Funding

- xii. It is suggested that the MoH funds the Advanced Diploma and Graduate Certificate in a way that provides greater certainty and enables longer term service planning. Ideally this would be through recurrent funding, although block funding (over several years) would improve on the present year-to-year project funding arrangement.



- xiii. Provision should be made in budget to manage ABSTUDY group applications for the Advanced Diploma.

Further research

- xiv. Further research would be helpful to understand the extent to which the Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway has led to more Aboriginal people accessing family violence services.



Appendix A – Participant Information Sheet: Course Participants and Graduates

Introduction

As a current or former participant of the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) Aboriginal Qualifications, you are invited to take part in an evaluation of the *Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling* and the *Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)*. The evaluation will provide a comprehensive description of the Aboriginal Qualifications in relation to their implementation, reach, appropriateness, impacts and implementation costs.

The evaluation is being conducted by the NSW Ministry of Health, led by Dr Andrew Milat (Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence), in collaboration with the Centre for Aboriginal Health. The NSW Ministry of Health has contracted Inca Consulting to implement the evaluation by collecting the information and reporting on the results. Inca has extensive experience evaluating Aboriginal projects. Their team includes an Aboriginal facilitator.

What am I being asked to do?

Participation in the evaluation will involve an interview with an evaluation consultant either in person or by telephone. The interview will run for about 30-60 minutes depending on how much you have to say. The interview questions will revolve around your involvement, personal experiences and satisfaction with the ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications.

Do I have to participate?

No. Participation in the evaluation is voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do take part you can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. Whatever your decision, it will not affect your job or relationship with the NSW Ministry of Health or ECAV.

Is there a cost?

There are no costs associated with participating in the evaluation. A suitable time for conducting the interview will be arranged.

Will the study benefit me?

While we intend that this evaluation will support improvements to the ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications in the future, it will not be of direct benefit to you.

What are the risks?

While we anticipate that the risk to you of taking part in this research study is minimal, you may become distressed when asked to reflect on the subject content of the course. If this is the case, the interviewer will stop the interview to see if you would like a break or time to collect your thoughts. They will also ask if you need to speak with a support person or be referred to a local health or counselling service.

Following the interview, the researcher or trained ECAV staff member will contact you to check on your wellbeing.

Your manager may also be asked to participate in an interview. Reporting responses however will not mention any course participants by name. The anonymity and confidentiality of both course participant and manager will be maintained.



What will happen to my information?

All the information collected from you will be treated confidentially, and only the Inca Consulting evaluators will have access to it. The NSW Ministry of Health is responsible for ensuring your privacy is respected, and that all your information remains confidential. The evaluation is focussed on the overall implementation of the ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications; we will not review or report experiences of individual people. Paper forms and electronic information will be stored securely, and only the evaluators can access the information. The evaluation results may be reported in a written report, but individuals will not be identifiable in any evaluation materials.

How do I consent to participate?

You are asked to provide written consent for the interview.

What are the next steps?

1. Decide if you do want to participate in the evaluation or not.
2. An evaluation consultant from Inca Consulting will telephone you in the next few weeks, and ask if you want to participate. If you agree to participate they will arrange a time for interview. If possible, the interview will be conducted with you in person.
3. Prior to the interview, you will be required to submit a signed consent form (located on the following page) to Inca Consulting.

Further information:

If you would like more information before making a decision on whether or not to participate, please call Rohan Pigott at Inca Consulting on (02) 9091 8018; or Dr Andrew Milat at the NSW Ministry of Health on (02) 9391 9292. Thank you for considering this invitation.

Ethics approval and complaints:

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Hunter New England Local Health District Human Research Ethics Committee. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to Dr Nicole Gerrand, Manager, Research Ethics and Governance Unit, Hunter New England Human Research Ethics Committee, Hunter New England Local Health District, Locked Bag 1, New Lambton NSW 2305, telephone (02) 4921 4950, email Hnehrec@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au and quote reference number 17/08/16/4.08.

This evaluation has also been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW. Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study should contact the Chairperson, AH&MRC Ethics Committee, PO Box 1565, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012, telephone (02) 9212 4777, email ethics@ahmrc.org.au and quote protocol number 1309/17



Appendix B – Discussion guides

Discussion Guide: Course Participants and Graduates

The Centre for Aboriginal Health (NSW Ministry of Health) has commissioned Inca Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma), delivered by ECAV. As part of the evaluation we're talking to past and present students, workplace managers, ECAV staff and educators, and other stakeholders.

This is a confidential interview – we will not report who said what to the Ministry or ECAV. We are interested in learning about your experiences both during and since doing the course.

During the interview you may become distressed answering the interview questions. If this occurs the interview will stop and I will check if you would like a break or time to collect your thoughts. You can stop the interview at any time. I will also arrange for you to speak with a support person or be referred to a local health counselling service if required. After the interview, either myself or a trained ECAV staff member will contact you to check on your wellbeing.

The interview should take about 30-60 minutes, depending on how much you have to say.

If possible I would like to audio record this interview so that I can make sure I can accurately reflect what you say. You do not have to agree to this, but it would be helpful. No one other than myself will hear this recording, and once I have finished taking notes from it I will delete it. Do you agree to audio recording?

Questions

Background

1. Could you first tell me a bit about yourself?
2. Where do you usually live and work?
3. Would you mind telling me your age?
4. Which courses have you done in the AFHW pathway? When did you do those?
5. What work are you doing now? Have you been in the same role for a while?
6. Apart from the [Advanced Diploma/Grad Cert] had you previously done any ECAV courses?
7. Had you done any other training courses before that?

Motivations and expectations

8. Now thinking back to when you enrolled in the Certificate IV, can you remember what your motivation for doing the course was? At that stage did you intend to go on and do the Advanced Diploma or Graduate Certificate? When did you decide to go on and do the more advanced course/s? What were your reasons for doing these?
9. Do you think that any aspects of your previous work or life experience helped you get through the courses?

Views about the Advanced Diploma

I would like to ask you your views about some specific aspects of the course/s. First let's look at the Advanced Diploma.

10. How well do you think the course was designed and delivered? Specifically, how would you rate:



- a. Course content – was it relevant, useful?
- b. Course structure – into the 6 modules?
- c. Quality of the teaching and materials?
- d. The relevance and usefulness of the assessments? Were they a good way to assess competencies?
- e. Quality and usefulness of the clinical supervision?
- f. The support provided by ECAV staff?
- 11. What do you think was particularly good about the course?
- 12. Is there any way you think the course could have been improved?
- 13. Have you been able to apply your learnings from the course to your day-to-day role? If so how or where have you applied these learnings?
- 14. How has participating in the course impacted on you personally and professionally (for example has it helped you to change jobs/roles)?
- 15. Have there been any other outcomes as a result of undertaking the course (for example has it had an impact on your family and/or community)?
- 16. [If relevant] Do you think you'll do the Graduate Certificate? Why/Why not?
- 17. How did you find the on-the-job course supervision? What were the benefits to supervision? What could be improved?

Views about the Graduate Certificate

Now let's talk about the Graduate Certificate.

- 18. How well do you think the course was designed and delivered? Specifically, how would you rate:
 - a. Course content – was it relevant, useful?
 - b. Course structure
 - c. Quality of the teaching and materials?
 - d. The relevance and usefulness of the assessments?
 - e. The support provided by ECAV and University of Sydney?
- 19. What do you think was particularly good about the course?
- 20. Is there any way you think the course could have been improved?
- 21. How has participating in the courses impacted on you personally and professionally (for example has it helped you to change jobs/roles)?
- 22. Have there been any other outcomes as a result of undertaking the course (for example has it had an impact on your family and/or community)?

Other

- 23. Do you feel the views, needs and values of Aboriginal communities are incorporated into course? Do you think the course/s are delivered in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way?
- 24. What are the some of the challenges/difficulties you experienced in doing the course/s? What helped you get through? Could anything else have been helpful to get you through?
- 25. Are there any barriers you see to other Aboriginal workers enrolling in and completing these courses? Are there people the courses suit, and people they don't suit?
- 26. Would you recommend the course/s to people doing the Certificate IV or Advanced Diploma? Why/Why not?
- 27. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Discussion Guide: ECAV Course Delivery Staff**

The Centre for Aboriginal Health (NSW Ministry of Health) has commissioned Inca Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the *Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling* and the *Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)*. As part of the evaluation we are talking to past and present students, workplace managers, ECAV staff and other stakeholders.

This is a confidential interview – we will not report who said what to the Ministry or ECAV. We are interested in learning about your experiences regarding the delivery of the courses.

During the interview you may become distressed answering the interview questions. If this occurs the interview will stop and I will check if you would like a break or time to collect your thoughts. You can stop the interview at any time. I will also arrange for you to speak with a support person or be referred to a local health counselling service if required. After the interview, either myself or a trained ECAV staff member will contact you to check on your wellbeing.

The interview should take 30-40 minutes, depending on how much you have to say.

If possible I would like to audio record this interview so that I can make sure I can accurately reflect what you say. You do not have to agree to this, but it would be helpful. No one other than myself will hear this recording, and once I have finished taking notes from it I will delete it. Do you agree to audio recording?

Questions

1. Could you first tell me a bit about yourself?
 - a. What is your role here at ECAV?
 - b. How long have you worked here? How long have you been in this role?
 - c. What involvement have you had with the AFHW pathway courses (Certificate IV, Advanced Diploma, Graduate Certificate)?
 - d. Have you completed these courses yourself as a student? If so what did you gain from it personally and professionally?
2. In what ways do the Advanced Diploma/Graduate Certificate programs differ from other programs that are around?
3. Do you think the courses are well designed? What do you see as the strengths of the course design? Are there any weaknesses or areas of course design that could be improved?
4. Is there any aspect of course delivery that could be improved?
5. How do you think the courses prepare people for working in family violence, sexual assault and child protection? How practical are they? How do they enhance participants' professional practice? Have you got any examples of where this has occurred?
6. Do you feel the assessments are fair and an appropriate way to assess achievement of course objectives/competencies?
7. What are some of the challenges or difficulties that students experience when doing the courses? How do they cope with these? What helps them get through?
8. What factors enhance students' capacity to do well and complete the course? What are the barriers? Is there anything more that could be done to assist those who struggle?
9. What types of support have you offered to students in your role at ECAV?
10. How well supported by their workplaces do you the feel students are?
11. Do you feel the views, needs and values of Aboriginal communities are incorporated



into the course curriculum? How is this achieved?

12. Do you know if the courses help participants with their career advancement? Have you got any examples?

13. Is the application process working well?

14. Is there anything else you would like to add?



Discussion Guide: ECAV Management

The Centre for Aboriginal Health (NSW Ministry of Health) has commissioned Inca Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the *Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling* and the *Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)*. As part of the evaluation we are talking to past and present students, workplace managers, ECAV staff and other stakeholders.

This is a confidential interview – we will not report who said what to the Ministry or your other colleagues within ECAV. We are interested in learning about your experiences regarding the delivery, coordination and management of the courses.

During the interview you may become distressed answering the interview questions. If this occurs the interview will stop and I will check if you would like a break or time to collect your thoughts. You can stop the interview at any time. I will also arrange for you to speak with a support person or be referred to a local health counselling service if required. After the interview, either myself or a trained ECAV staff member will contact you to check on your wellbeing.

The interview should take 30-40 minutes, depending on how much you have to say.

If possible I would like to audio record this interview so that I can make sure I can accurately reflect what you say. You do not have to agree to this, but it would be helpful. No one other than myself will hear this recording, and once I have finished taking notes from it I will delete it. Do you agree to audio recording?

Questions

Advanced Diploma

1. How did the course develop?
2. How were the competencies developed?
3. How has it changed over time?
4. To what extent are students transitioning from the Cert IV? What barriers might there be to transitioning?
5. Are there common attributes of students undertaking the Advanced Diploma?
6. Are there any recognition of prior learning arrangements?
7. What is the completion rate like? What are the main reasons for non-completion? Is it lower than in the Cert IV?
8. How do you judge success? Is it just completion?
9. What do you observe about the students who complete – how do they show their capacity? What feedback do you get from students and workplaces?
10. What does the Advanced Diploma do for students that the Cert IV didn't?

How about the Graduate Certificate?

11. How is the program arranged with Sydney University?
12. How were the competencies developed?
13. To what extent are they going on to the Masters?

The Pathway

14. Why would someone go through all three stages?
15. How are the programs promoted?
16. How could retention and completion rates in the course be improved? Would this have any negative impacts?
17. How effective do you think the approach to student selection is? Are you attracting



the right groups of students? Are there any changes to this approach that you would suggest?

18. How is student progress through the pathway monitored and evaluated?

19. What are the key considerations in recruiting and supporting course delivery staff and management (Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal)?

20. What strategic vision do you hold for this pathway?

21. Is there anything else you would like to add?



Discussion Guide: Workplace Managers and Supervisors of course participants and graduates

The Centre for Aboriginal Health (NSW Ministry of Health) has commissioned Inca Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the *Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling* and the *Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)*, delivered by ECAV. As part of the evaluation we are talking to past and present students, workplace managers, ECAV staff and educators, as well as other stakeholders involved in the delivery of the courses.

We would like to talk to you in your supervisory role of a worker who has undertaken either the Advanced Diploma or the Graduate Certificate (or both). The focus of our discussion will be on any impacts you have observed that the training may have had on their work.

This is a confidential interview – we will not report who said what to the Ministry or ECAV. We are interested in learning about your experiences both during and since your worker has participated in the courses.

During the interview you may become distressed answering the interview questions. If this occurs the interview will stop and I will check if you would like a break or time to collect your thoughts. You can stop the interview at any time. I will also arrange for you to speak with a support person or be referred to a local health counselling service if required.

The interview should take around 30-40 minutes, depending on how much you have to say.

If possible I would like to audio record this interview so that I can make sure I can accurately reflect what you say. You do not have to agree to this, but it would be helpful. No one other than myself will hear this recording, and once I have finished taking notes from it I will delete it. Do you agree to audio recording?

Questions

1. What is your role at this organisation? How long have you been in this role? How long have you supervised [worker's name]?
2. Did [worker's name] do either the Advanced Diploma or the Graduate Certificate whilst employed with this organisation? When was that?
3. What difference do you think the training has made to his/her capacity in their role? Can you give any specific examples of ways in which the worker's capacity has been enhanced?
4. Do you think the study program has brought benefits to the organisation?
5. Did the study program otherwise impact on the organisation?
6. How manageable were the demands of the course with the worker's job workload?
7. How well do you feel the Aboriginal Family Health Worker qualification pathway (the progression of Certificate IV-Advanced Diploma-Graduate Certificate) prepares people for working in the area of family violence, sexual assault and child protection?
8. What supports were you able to put in place for the worker? Were there any limitations on the supports you were able to provide?
9. Are there any improvements you'd like to see made to the courses (e.g. in terms of curriculum, practical arrangements)?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?



Discussion Guide: NSW Health

The Centre for Aboriginal Health (NSW Ministry of Health) has commissioned Inca Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the *Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling* and the *Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)*.

This is a confidential interview – we will not report who said what to the Ministry or ECAV. We are interested in learning about your experiences of coordinating, delivering, monitoring and advising on the courses. During the interview you may become distressed answering the interview questions. If this occurs the interview will stop and I will check if you would like a break or time to collect your thoughts. You can stop the interview at any time. I will also arrange for you to speak with a support person or be referred to a local health counselling service if required.

The interview should take around 30-40 minutes, depending on how much you have to say.

If possible I would like to audio record this interview so that I can make sure I can accurately reflect what you say. You do not have to agree to this, but it would be helpful. No one other than myself will hear this recording, and once I have finished taking notes from it I will delete it. Do you agree to audio recording?

Questions

1. Could you first tell me a bit about yourself? What is your substantive role? How long have you worked in your current role at the NSW Ministry of Health?
2. How are your agencies involved or engaged in the management or delivery of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and/or the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)?
3. Where do you think these courses fit in broader efforts to build the capacity of health staff to respond to Aboriginal family violence?
4. Are there ways that delivery of these courses could be improved or done more efficiently?
5. Is there potential for ECAV to collaborate with mainstream education providers?
 - a. Prompt: For instance, could the Health Education Training Institute (HETI), TAFE, the Aboriginal Health College or other providers be engaged?
6. What should be the main considerations in coordinating and delivering these courses?
 - a. Prompt: What things would help or make it hard to coordinate and deliver these courses?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?



Discussion Guide: University of Sydney

The Centre for Aboriginal Health (NSW Ministry of Health) has commissioned Inca Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the *Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling* and the *Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)*.

This is a confidential interview – we will not report who said what to the Ministry or ECAV. We are interested in learning about your experiences of coordinating, delivering and monitoring the Graduate Certificate in collaboration with ECAV.

The interview should take around 30-40 minutes, depending on how much you have to say.

During the interview you may become distressed answering the interview questions. If this occurs the interview will stop and I will check if you would like a break or time to collect your thoughts. You can stop the interview at any time. I will also arrange for you to speak with a support person or be referred to a local health counselling service if required.

If possible I would like to audio record this interview so that I can make sure I can accurately reflect what you say. You do not have to agree to this, but it would be helpful. No one other than myself will hear this recording, and once I have finished taking notes from it I will delete it. Do you agree to audio recording?

Questions

1. Could you first tell me a bit about yourself? What is your substantive role? How long have you been a part of the team responsible for the Graduate Certificate at the University of Sydney?
2. How is the University of Sydney involved or engaged in the management or delivery of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and/or the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)?
3. Can you tell me about how the courses are coordinated and evaluated?
 - a. Prompts: How are course curriculum and teaching approaches developed and refined? How do you support student recruitment and retention? What functions and processes are in place to monitor course achievements? How are these working?
4. What are the main considerations in coordinating and monitoring the impacts of these courses?
 - a. Prompt: What things help or make it hard to coordinate and monitor the impacts of these courses?
5. What are the main considerations in delivering the course?
6. Prompt: What things help or make it hard to deliver the course? How do you support your students to engage with the course?
7. How does the partnership between the University of Sydney and ECAV operate? How do you think the relationship is working?
8. What do you think of the courses?
 - a. Prompts: Are they delivered in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner? Are they meeting their objectives?
9. How could the courses be improved?
10. What do you think can be done to increase the number of students going on to do the Masters Qualifying in Social Work?
11. What do you see as the main achievements of the courses?
12. What do you see as the main barriers and enablers of the courses?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?



Discussion Guide: Aboriginal Communities Matter Advisory Group (ACMAG)

The Centre for Aboriginal Health (NSW Ministry of Health) has commissioned Inca Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the *Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling* and the *Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)*.

This is a confidential interview – we will not report who said what to the Ministry or ECAV. We are interested in learning about your experiences of advising about the courses.

During the interview you may become distressed answering the interview questions. If this occurs the interview will stop and I will check if you would like a break or time to collect your thoughts. You can stop the interview at any time. I will also arrange for you to speak with a support person or be referred to a local health counselling service if required.

The interview should take around 30-40 minutes, depending on how much you have to say.

If possible I would like to audio record this interview so that I can make sure I can accurately reflect what you say. You do not have to agree to this, but it would be helpful. No one other than myself will hear this recording, and once I have finished taking notes from it I will delete it. Do you agree to audio recording?

Questions

1. Could you first tell me a bit about yourself? What is your substantive role? How long have you been a part of ACMAG?
2. How does ACMAG support the coordination and delivery of the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services (Interpersonal Trauma)?
3. Can you tell me about how the relationship between ACMAG and ECAV is working?
4. What do you think of the courses? What have they achieved?
5. What do you see as the strengths of the courses? Are there any weaknesses or areas that need to be improved?
6. Do you feel the courses are delivered in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner? Do they incorporate the views, needs and values of Aboriginal communities?
7. Do you feel that the courses are meeting their objectives? Are the course objectives relevant?
8. What do you see as the main barriers and enablers of the courses?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?



Appendix C - Results of tests of statistical significance between the proportions of ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications Pathway course graduations by subgroups of attendees.

The following table sets out the results of one and two-tailed z-tests (proportions), performed using Microsoft Excel. A p-value of less than 0.05 generally indicates a statistically significant difference in the graduation rate between subgroups.

Males (n=60)		Females (n=379)		<i>p-value</i>
<i>Number graduated</i>	%	<i>Number graduated</i>	%	
30	50	261	69	.0084
<40 years (n=167)		40+ years (n=234)		<i>p-value</i>
<i>Number graduated</i>	%	<i>Number graduated</i>	%	
108	65	160	68	.6101
NSW Health employees (n=174)		Others (n=265)		<i>p-value</i>
<i>Number graduated</i>	%	<i>Number graduated</i>	%	
121	70	170	64	.2382
Greater Sydney (n=150)		Regional or rural NSW (n=258)		<i>p-value</i>
<i>Number graduated</i>	%	<i>Number graduated</i>	%	
106	71	163	63	.0864
AFHWs (n=97)		Others (n=342)		<i>p-value</i>
<i>Number graduated</i>	%	<i>Number graduated</i>	%	
67	69	224	65	.4651