

Strengthening Queensland's NDIS Workforce 2022





This report has been commissioned by Jobs Queensland to Community Services industry Alliance. For further information on the NDIS Workforce Research project visit <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/projects/ndis-workforce/> or <https://csialtd.com.au>

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Community Industry Services Alliance acknowledges the Traditional Custodian of the lands on which we work. We pay respect and give thanks to Elders, past, present and future who have – and continue to – pave the way for reconciliation in this land we call Australia.



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1. Executive summary

This report is the final in a series of three research reports examining the state of the NDIS workforce across Queensland, along with the challenges, opportunities and initiatives impacting upon it. Together, they provide a picture of changes in the workforce over the period 2019 – 2022.

NDIS participants

During the research period, the number of NDIS participants has more than doubled, with over 116,000 Queenslanders receiving supports as of September 2022 (NDIS 2022a). Amongst these participants, the largest proportions are those whose primary disability is autism, intellectual disability, psychosocial disability or developmental delay.

The numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants have nearly doubled between March 2020 and September 2022 (NDIS 2022a), heightening the importance of building the cultural diversity of the NDIS workforce.

The NDIS workforce

The number of aged and disabled carers¹ in Queensland has grown significantly over the research period, from just over 35,000 in March 2019 to well over 67,000 in September 2022 (ABS 2022).

However, this growth is still not enough to keep pace with demand, with employers continuing to report that they struggle to find sufficient numbers of suitable workers. There are also critical shortages of certain allied health professionals essential in determining eligibility and providing NDIS supports.

Queensland has a higher number of aged and disabled carers per 100 participants than most other states and territories, but fewer than average for most allied health occupations, indicating that Queensland may feel these particular shortages even more acutely.

Lack of diversity within the workforce also remains an issue. There have been notable increases in numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the NDIS workforce, and in numbers of male aged and disabled carers. However, there are continuing

barriers to entry to the NDIS workforce for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from CALD backgrounds. It is also noted that the average age of aged and disabled carers remains high.

NDIS workforce supply and demand

The research findings show that significant progress has been made in growing the NDIS workforce in Queensland. However, the growth is not enough to keep pace with growth in the numbers of NDIS participants, while worker turnover rates remain high and service providers report persistent skill and labour shortages. These shortages are not only occurring in frontline roles, such as aged and disabled carers and allied health professionals, but in other parts of organisations, such as rostering, management, finance and HR.

There are several contributing factors to this situation:

- The marketised nature of services under the NDIS means that a large proportion of the workforce works on a casual or part-time basis, and that rates of underutilisation of workers are higher than the average across industries.
- Current economic and labour market conditions, in combination with very low margins within NDIS pricing to increase wages, mean that NDIS providers cannot compete with the higher wages and recruitment incentives offered to workers in other industries. A decrease of more than 6,000 aged and disabled carers in the September 2022 quarter may be a reflection of the impact of these conditions.
- Retention of skilled workers is a significant challenge for the sector, with some providers reporting as much as 25% to 50% annual turnover in frontline roles.

These findings suggest that to meet the demand for skilled workers in the sector, attention needs to turn to improving retention, increasing utilisation of the workforce and focusing recruitment efforts on groups of potential candidates that may be harder to reach and may require greater support to become skilled workers.

1. Aged and Disabled Carers' is the occupation category used by the ABS for aged care and disability support workers

Issues of workforce and service delivery continue to be a challenge in rural and remote areas. Innovative approaches are beginning to be implemented to grow the availability of skilled workers in these areas.

Across the state, service providers are implementing a range of strategies to try to attract and recruit new employees. However, retention measures and considerations of strategies such as job redesign are also needed to address workforce shortages. Better induction and support for new recruits is vital to minimise the loss of workers and skills from the sector.

Much has already been done by Government and industry over the life of this workforce research project to address these issues, and the knowledge and resources developed through this work provide a strong foundation for moving forward.

Workforce initiatives

A series of workforce initiatives has been implemented as part of the NDIS Workforce Project to address issues identified through the research. They include:

- Development of the *Workforce Planning Connect Toolkit*, to assist small and medium NDIS service providers to develop their skills and capacity to undertake workforce planning, along with delivery of a series of Workforce Planning Connect workshops across the state.
- Research into the use of allied health assistants as a means of meeting the demand for allied health supports under the NDIS and development of the *Allied Health Assistants Good Practice Guide*.
- Research into the uptake, barriers and enablers to the use of Group Training to deliver traineeships in the disability sector, along with development of the *Guide to NDIS traineeships using Group Training*.
- Development of an Online resource hub to house NDIS workforce resources and information about government funding and supports.

Other initiatives implemented by the sector during the research period, such as those undertaken through the NDIS Training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS), have provided valuable lessons and models for developing and supporting the NDIS workforce.



**Significant
progress has been
made in growing the
NDIS workforce
in Queensland**

The future of the NDIS workforce

The research findings point towards a number of areas of action for industry stakeholders to continue to support development of the NDIS workforce in Queensland.



Action area 1: Workforce planning and development

- 1.1 Address high turnover rates and retain skilled workers within the sector.
- 1.2 Target and support harder to reach groups and increase diversity of the workforce through the creation of new attraction and recruitment pipeline.
- 1.3 Ensure promotional activities are linked to clear education and employment pathways.
- 1.4 Continue to promote and support the use of allied health assistants (AHAs).
- 1.5 Investigate options for skilled migration to assist with addressing shortages in professional occupations within the NDIS workforce.



Action area 2: Training and skills

- 2.1 Continue industry-led and government-enabled work to design and implement training solutions that meet the needs of the sector.
- 2.2 Continue to encourage and support NDIS service providers to adopt more strategic approaches to workforce planning, attraction, recruitment, retention and job design.



Action area 3: Contribution to policy development

- 3.1 Advocate for and contribute to the development and availability of better workforce data.
- 3.2 Contribute to national policy related to the establishment of an appropriately skilled and sized NDIS workforce.



Learning

2. Background and context

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) commenced its roll-out in Queensland in 2016. Initial participation in the scheme was slower than expected. The first research report in 2020 showed that just over 55,000 Queenslanders were receiving supports in September 2019, compared to projections of 91,000 (Jobs Queensland 2020). Since that time, however, the number of NDIS participants has more than doubled, with over 116,000 Queenslanders receiving supports as of September 2022 (NDIS 2022a).

This growth is forecast to continue. This in turn means that strong demand for additional workers to enter the sector will continue, with NDIS-related occupations predicted to be some of the fastest growing jobs in Queensland in coming years.

The Queensland NDIS Workforce Research Project

This NDIS Workforce 2022 report is the final in a series of three research reports examining the state of the NDIS workforce across Queensland, along with the challenges, opportunities and initiatives impacting upon it. Together, they provide a picture of changes in the workforce over the period 2019 – 2022.

Jobs Queensland commissioned Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) and the former WorkAbility Qld (a consortium of community services industry bodies) to conduct this research into Queensland's NDIS workforce to inform advice to Government and industry on skills demand and supply issues. The research findings are also informing other stakeholders' efforts to meet workforce

demands and skills needs for the NDIS. Several workforce initiatives have been developed and implemented on the basis of the research findings and form part of the overall workforce research project.

This final report presents data on Queensland's NDIS workforce and the participants they support, as of September 2022, and reflects on changes that have occurred over the research period. It outlines the challenges that continue to affect workforce supply, the opportunities presented by current policy directions and reforms and the impacts of workforce initiatives undertaken during this period.

The report also highlights areas in which further work is needed and makes recommendations for actions to support the ongoing development of the NDIS workforce.

Methodology

This final report draws upon current and longitudinal data from a range of sources, including NDIS data, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) labour force and census data, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) training data and Queensland Government data on NDIS Worker Screening Checks.

It is also informed by feedback from employers who participated in the workforce initiatives described in this report and a series of service provider roundtables conducted in October and November 2022, as well as the findings of surveys, focus groups, interviews, forums and research activities conducted over the life of the project.

3. Workforce initiatives

In addition to the three annual Strengthening Queensland's NDIS Workforce reports and six regional workforce reports², there have been a series of workforce initiatives implemented as part of the NDIS Workforce Project. These initiatives were developed in response to findings of the earlier research reports, and included:

- Development of the *Workforce Planning Connect Toolkit*³, to assist small and medium NDIS service providers to develop their skills and capacity to undertake workforce planning, along with delivery of a series of Workforce Planning Connect workshops across the state.
- Research into the use of allied health assistants as a means of meeting the demand for allied health supports under the NDIS and development of the *Allied Health Assistants Good Practice Guide*⁴.
- Research into the uptake, barriers and enablers to the use of Group Training to deliver traineeships in the disability sector, along with development of the *Guide to NDIS traineeships using Group Training*⁵.
- Development of an Online resource hub to house NDIS workforce resources and information about government funding and supports⁶.

A recent evaluation of the overall NDIS Workforce Research Project found that the reports and initiatives have provided the sector with a range of useful information and resources that are elevating conversations about the NDIS workforce and supporting problem solving in key areas in which employers have struggled.

The evaluation report highlights a range of ways in which the information and resources are supporting industry and policy-makers in NDIS workforce development and planning. For example:

- The **research reports** have proved useful for government agencies, industry bodies and education providers in **highlighting data gaps and opportunities**, providing **insights for education program design** and providing evidence and justification for **key areas of action**.

With a lot of the work we do, we rely on that type of research because our work feeds into more strategic goals, so to understand what an industry needs is important. VET stakeholder

Those reports were able to identify some best practice but also look at where the gaps were and enable the generation of a holistic approach to supporting the workforce. Industry stakeholder

The number of active NDIS participants are expected to more than double in the next decade...

2. Available at <https://csialtd.com.au/major-programs/research/ndis-workforce-research-project/>

3. Available at <https://csialtd.com.au/major-programs/workforce-planning-connect-toolkit/>

4. Available at <https://csialtd.com.au/2022/04/22/introducing-the-allied-health-assistants-good-practice-guide/>

5. Available at <https://csialtd.com.au/2022/09/09/a-guide-to-ndis-traineeships-using-group-training/>

6. Available at <https://csialtd.com.au/resources/>

- The **Workforce Planning Connect Toolkit** fills a gap in guidance for small service providers by offering a practical industry-specific resource that helps them take a **long-term strategic approach** to workforce planning and to utilise **training-based recruitment** and **retention strategies**.

The best thing from the workshop was the excel tools. I really think the workforce projection excel tool was really impressive - it wasn't too simple - I had to put in historical turnover rates, all of those factors that gave you a real number of staff... very realistic. That really stood out as great tool. Service provider

I think it's always good to have those types of resources available - you don't know what you don't know. It gives you time and space to understand systems and processes - it's a valuable tool. Service provider

- The **Workforce Planning Connect workshops** have had strong engagement by participants because they allowed **sharing, joint problem solving** and **collaboration** at a **regional level**. They also provided an avenue for collecting data on **regional workforce issues**.

At the workshops the level of engagement was good around the room. It's good to know you don't have to start from scratch... there's energy around the fact that resources are available. Service provider

- The *Allied Health Assistants Good Practice Guide* provides an 'easy-to-digest' conversation starter to encourage the industry to improve use of allied health assistants as a way of easing pressure on the allied health workforce and using NDIS budgets more efficiently. The resource is being welcomed by industry, but deeper and more nuanced resources and conversations around business models, governance and risk are now required to progress the issue.

The content is quite top level - it's an easy read, a good starting place, formatted well and real positives to us. We need a follow up that drills down into more detail. But it's a really good starting place. Industry stakeholder

- With dedicated promotion, the **Guide to NDIS Traineeships using Group Training** has the potential to assist employers to **'grow their own' skilled workforce**. It also opens up new networks for **recruiting** and **training staff**. Opportunities for **employers to listen to employers** who have used group training and to talk with Group Training Organisations (GTOs) directly about the model, using the guide as a resource, will **promote continued engagement with the topic**.

I would say the guide is clearly written. It does highlight the challenges the community services sector is facing at the moment - it's a fast-growing sector and it takes a lot of effort to maintain quality of service. It highlights very well the value and benefit that group training model can offer the sector. Industry stakeholder

The recruiting manager and the business development field officer will use this. It's a document that can become part of that bag they take out to see clients. It helps us engage with employers. VET stakeholder

- The online resource hub has helped to ensure years of important work remains in the public sphere and can be easily accessed. The funding and support information provided through the hub provides short, relevant information for employers wishing to access workforce subsidies and incentives. However, recurrent resources will be required to keep it updated.

The VET system is complicated... it's still hard to find answers... employers don't have time especially small employers and there's a lot of those in the NDIS industry.
Industry stakeholder

The evaluation recommends that a range of strategies be implemented to further disseminate, promote and utilise the information and resources produced through the project. It also identifies a series of issues and topics of interest highlighted through elements of the project, which could form the basis of further work to support the sector:

- Retention of workers
- Granular place-based data for businesses
- Workforce planning for Indigenous businesses
- Business planning for sole traders
- Developing business cases, governance, risk and cost models for employing allied health assistants, including in rural/remote areas
- Identifying and showcasing examples of successful use of group training by NDIS providers.



4. Queensland NDIS participants

Key findings

- Underutilisation of supports in remote and very remote locations could be indicative of an underdeveloped market and workforce shortages.
- Currently, the largest proportions of NDIS participants are those with a primary disability of autism, intellectual disability, psychosocial disability and developmental delay. The proportions of participants with autism, other disability and psychosocial disability have seen the largest increases since 2019. The needs of these groups of participants require particular consideration in relation to development of the NDIS workforce.
- More than 43 per cent of NDIS participants are aged under 15 years.
- Services for the large number of participants aged 0-6 receiving support for development delay are likely to be impacted by ongoing and critical shortages of allied health professionals and early childhood educators.
- Continuing underspend on NDIS capacity building support could point to a gap in services and skills to provide these supports, such as allied health professionals..
- Increases in the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, (which have nearly doubled between March 2020 and September 2022) heightens the importance of building the cultural diversity of the NDIS workforce.

Groups with autism or an intellectual disability account for more than half of all NDIS participants in Queensland.

As of September 2022, a total of 116,594 Queenslanders with a disability were receiving supports through the NDIS - more than double the number of participants in September 2019 (NDIS 2022a).

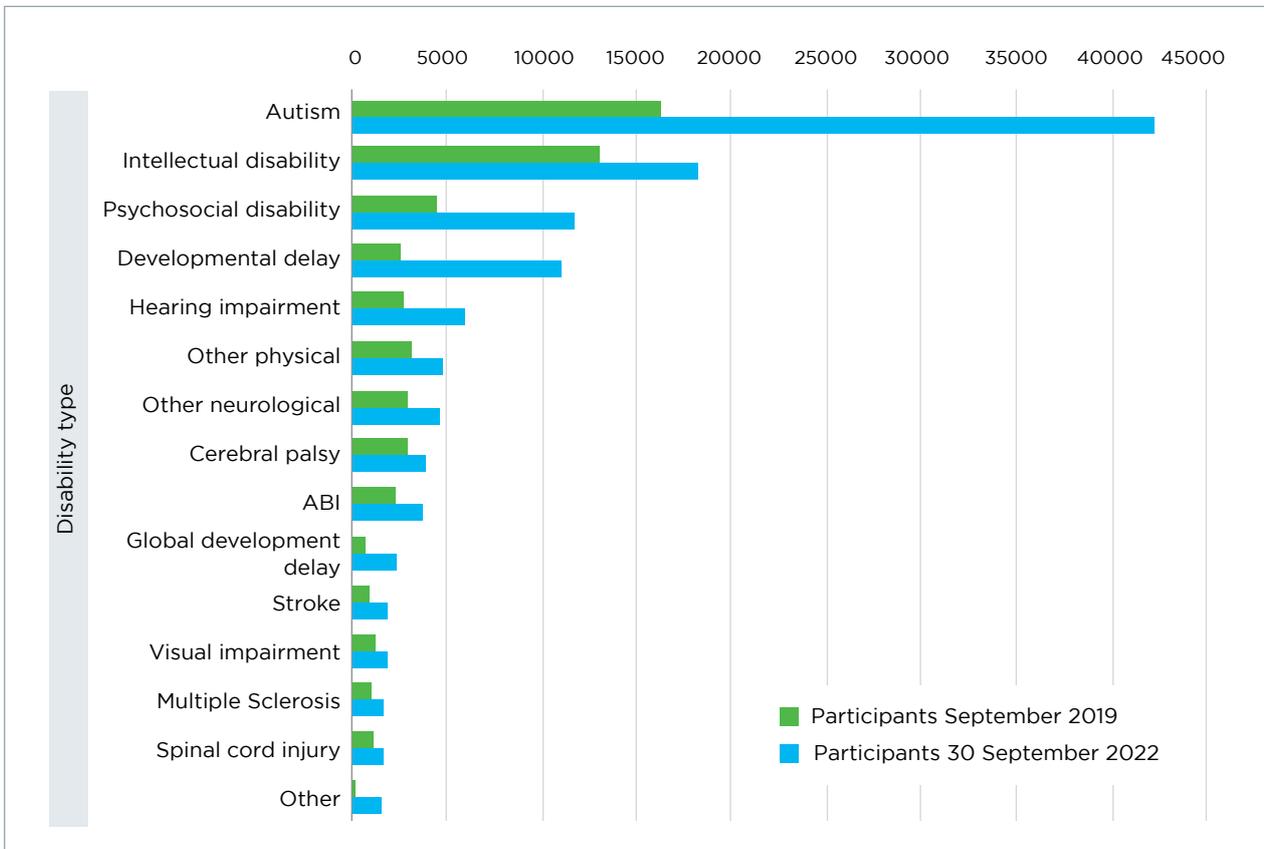
Selected participant characteristics

Primary disability

NDIS data on participants' primary disability indicates that autism continues to be the largest participant group (43,330), followed by those with an intellectual disability (18,042). Together, these two groups account for more than half of all NDIS participants in Queensland. Participants with psychosocial disability (11,685) and developmental delay (11,045) make up the next largest groups (see Figure 1).

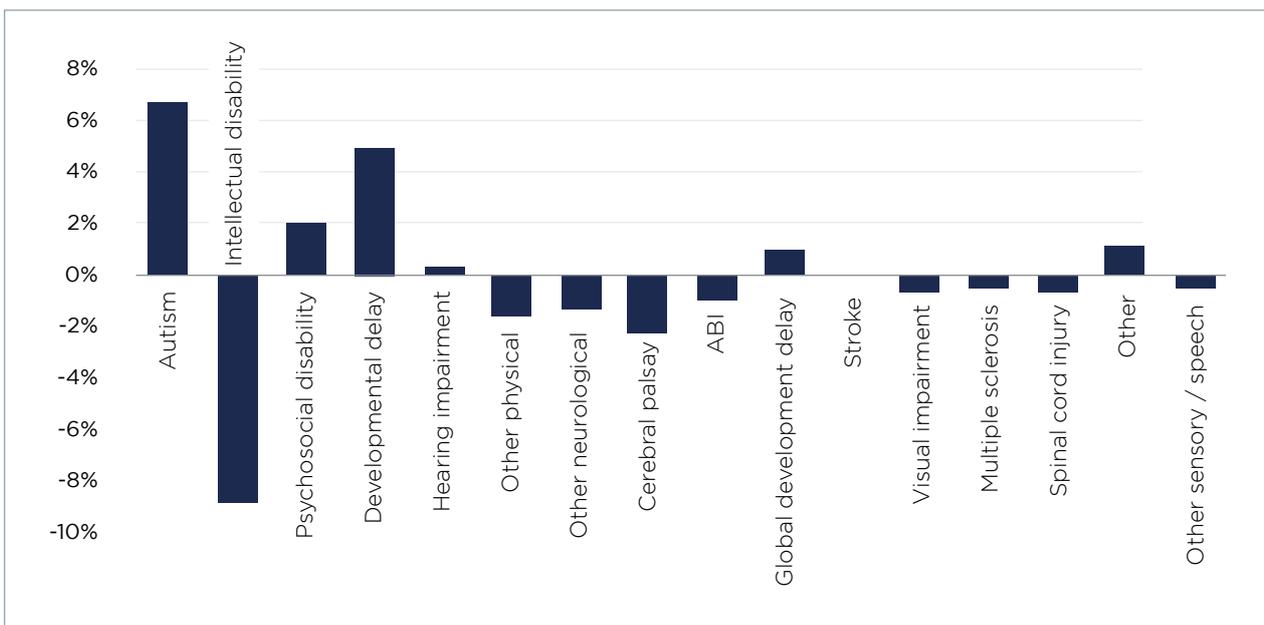
Since September 2019, the disability types that have grown the most as a proportion of total participants, have been autism (6.7 per cent), developmental delay (4.9 per cent) and psychosocial disability (2 per cent) (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Queensland NDIS participants by disability type, September 2019 to September 2022



NDIS 2022a, Participant numbers and plan budgets data, September 2022

Figure 2: Shift in proportion of Queensland NDIS participants by disability type, September 2019 to September 2022

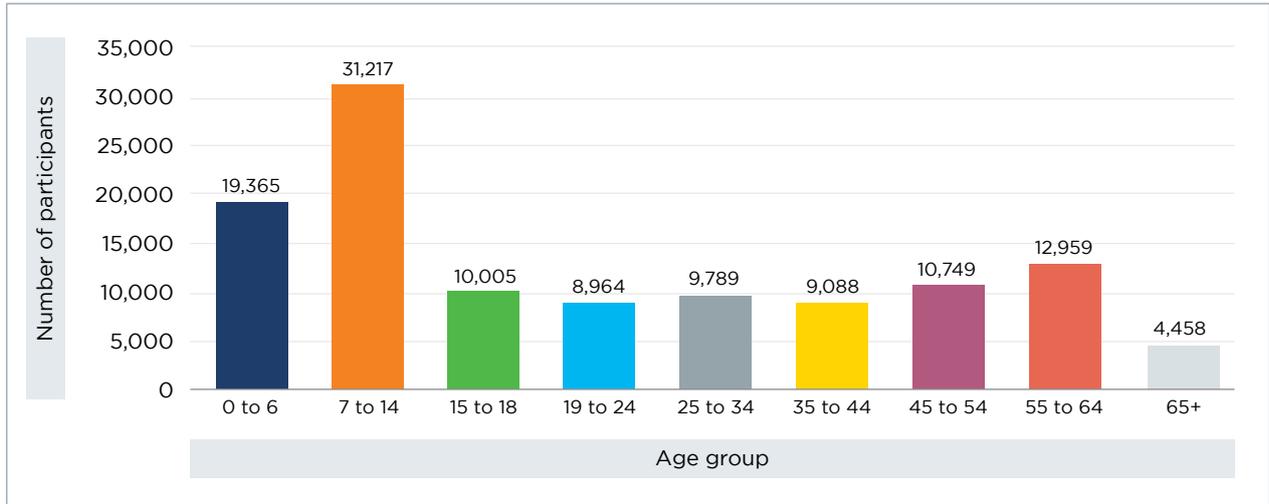


NDIS 2022a, Participant numbers and plan budgets data, September 2019 and September 2022

Age

More than 36 per cent of NDIS participants in Queensland are under the age of 15 and 19,365 of these are children under the age of 7 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: NDIS participants in Queensland by age group, September 2022

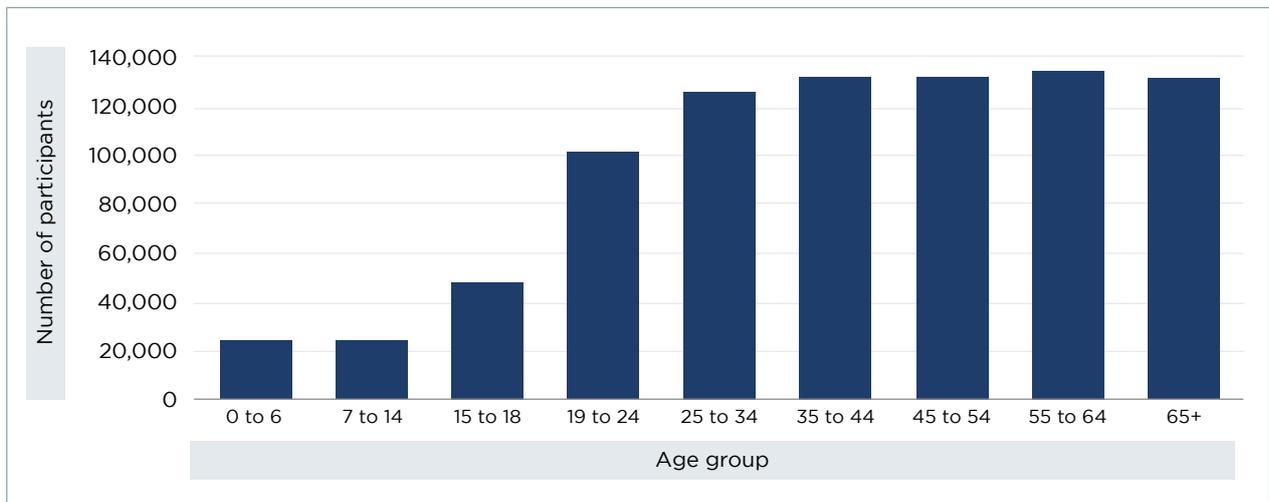


NDIS 2022a, Participant numbers and plan budgets data, September 2022

Support budgets

Data on average NDIS support budgets illustrates the increasing reliance of participants on NDIS funding as they age and no longer require support from families, move out of the education system and support from families, and seek to build greater independence (see Figure 4). This indicates that although there are large numbers of children and young people participating in the NDIS, the majority of support services are delivered to participants aged over 18 years.

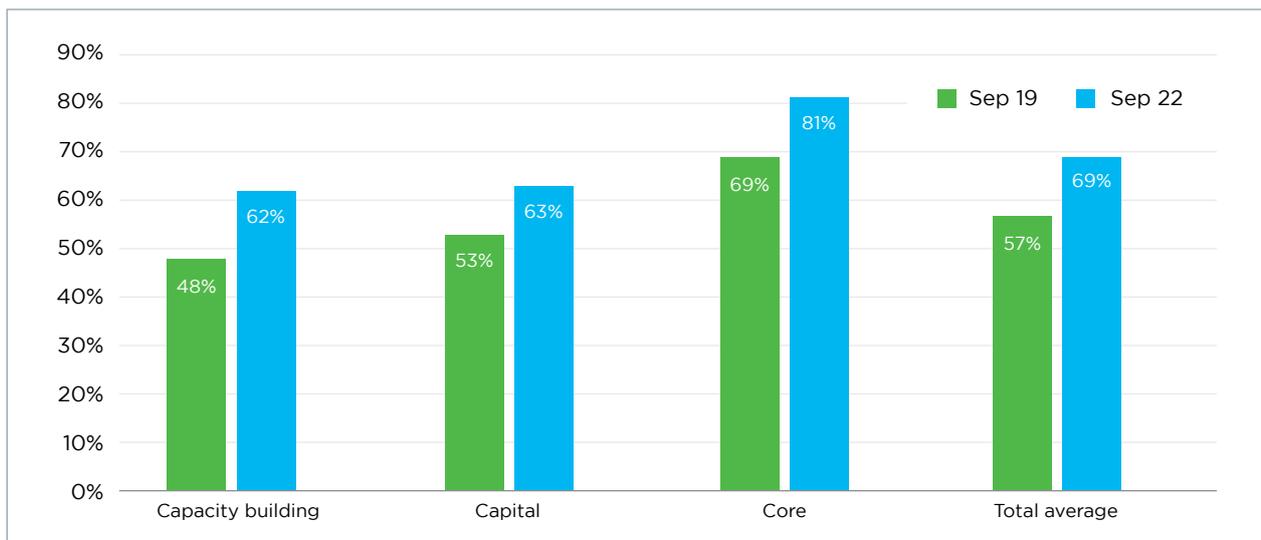
Figure 4: NDIS participant average support budget by age group, September 2022



NDIS 2022a, Participant numbers and plan budgets data, September 2022

While plan utilisation has improved since 2019 across all three support classes, capacity building and capital supports are the classes in which there remains significant underutilisation of plan budgets (see Figure 5). Underutilisation can be an indicator of lack of access to support services and the workforce required to deliver these supports.

Figure 5: Average percentage of budget utilised by Queensland NDIS participants, September 2019 to September 2022



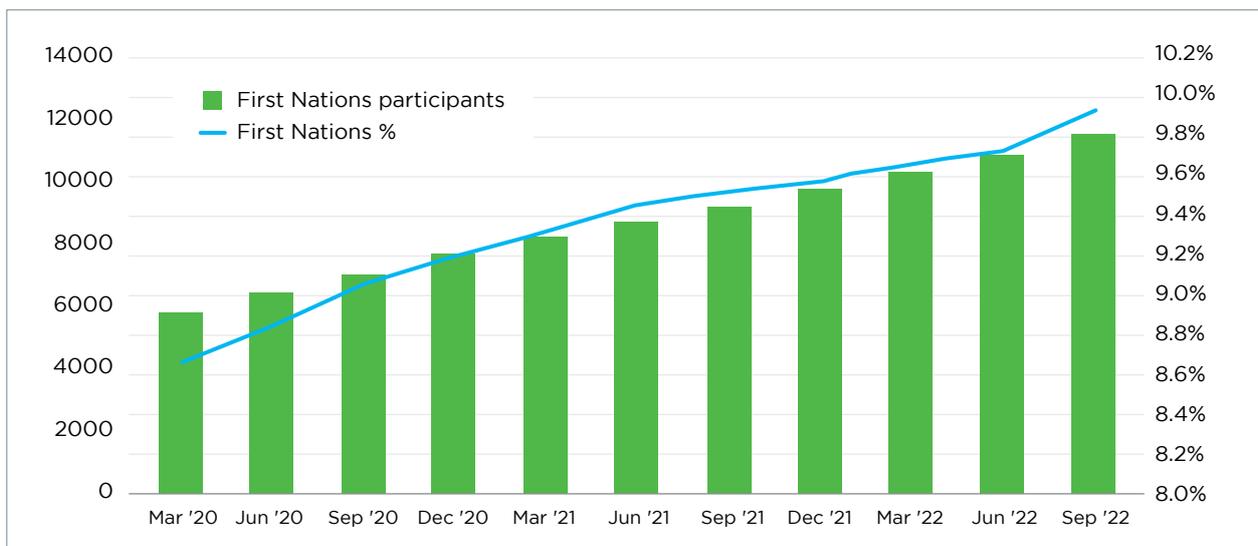
NDIS 2022b, Utilisation of plan budgets data, September 2019 and September 2022

Data illustrates the increasing reliance of participants on NDIS funding as they age and no longer require support from families.

Cultural diversity

The diversity of NDIS participants is increasing. The total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in September 2022 was 11,591 (9.9 per cent) (NDIS 2022c), while 6,285 (5.4 per cent) of participants were from CALD backgrounds (NDIS 2022d). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants have progressively grown in both number (5,702) and proportion (1.2%) since these numbers were first released in March 2020 (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NDIS participants by number and proportion March 2020 to September 2022



NDIS 2022c, First Nations participants March 2020 to September 2022

The proportion of participants from CALD backgrounds has remained relatively static over time. However, given that CALD definitions are based on English language proficiency, this data is not a reliable indicator of cultural diversity amongst participants.



Management of Country
to begin by acknowledging the
owners of the land throughout Austr
their continuing connection to the

5. Queensland NDIS workforce

Key findings

- Data limitations mean that workforce data patterns can be considered to be indicative only.
- The number of aged and disabled carers in Queensland has grown significantly over the research period, from just over 35,000 in March 2019 to well over 67,000 in September 2022.
- This growth is still not enough to keep pace with demand, with employers continuing to report that they struggle to find sufficient numbers of suitable workers. Shortages of certain allied health professionals providing NDIS supports also continue to be critical.
- A significant drop in aged and disabled carer numbers (more than 6000) in the August 2022 quarter may well reflect the impact of current economic conditions on the sector as it struggles to compete with higher paying industries.
- Queensland has a higher number of aged and disabled carers per 100 participants than most other states and territories, but fewer than average for most allied health occupations, indicating that Queensland may feel these shortages even more acutely.
- In 2021, the average age of aged and disabled carers in Queensland was 42, but was in the 30s for podiatrists, physiotherapists, speech pathologist and occupational therapists. More work may be needed to attract greater numbers of young people into support worker roles.
- Whilst the number of male aged and disabled carers has almost doubled in the past year, there has been very little change in the cultural diversity of the NDIS workforce up to the time of the 2021 Census.

Some notes on the limitations of NDIS workforce data

Data on the NDIS workforce is very difficult to extract from existing data sources for several reasons:

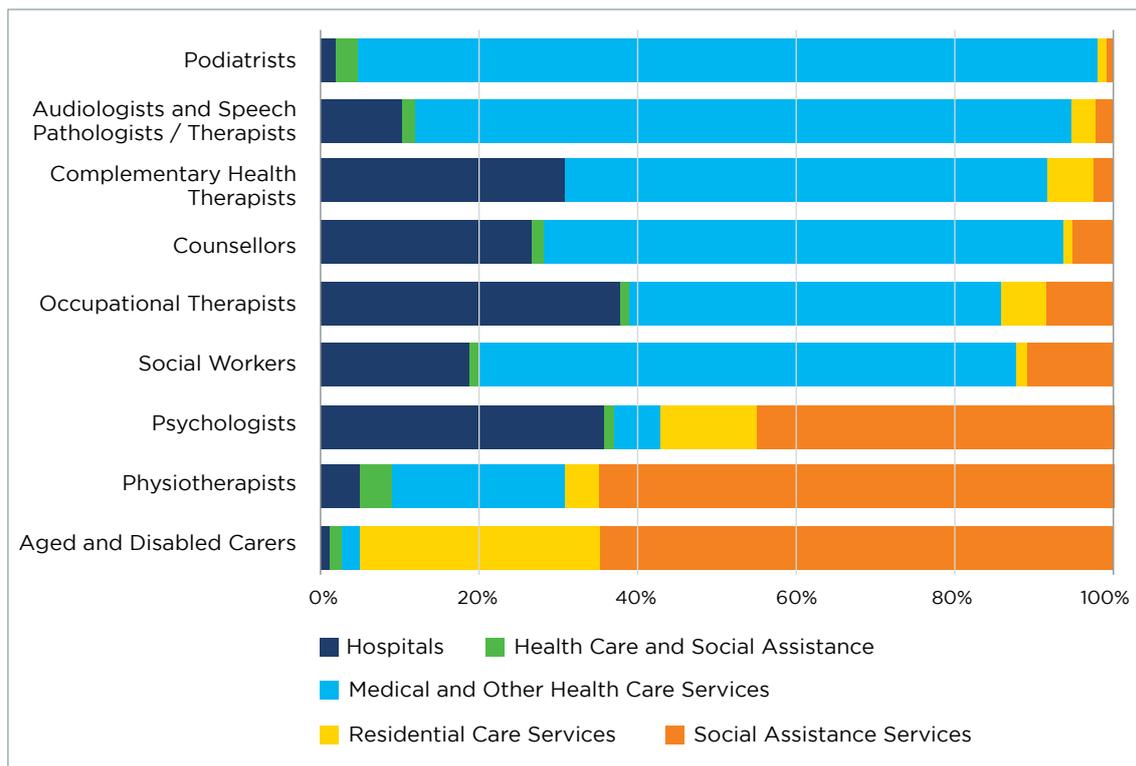
- Occupational data Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) combines disability support workers and aged care workers under the single classification of Aged and Disabled Carers. Therefore, it is not possible to identify disability support workers as a distinct group.
- While data is available on individual allied health occupations (e.g. physiotherapists, speech therapists, podiatrists etc), only a small proportion of these are likely to be providing services under the NDIS.
- Census data that links occupation and industry for individuals provides some indication of what proportion of each occupation might be working within disability-related industries.
- However, industry data Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) also do not isolate the NDIS sector. NDIS services fit within the classifications of Other Social Assistance Services (which also incorporates community aged care services, but not residential aged care) and Other Residential Care Services (which excludes aged care, but includes other types of residential services such as crisis care and children's out of home care).

- Queensland Data on National NDIS Worker Screening approvals (formerly the Yellow Card) provides an indication of the NDIS workforce more broadly. However, the figures may include an increasing number of aged care workers as well as people who have received approval, but are not currently or no longer working in the industry.

Census data provides some indication of the composition of the NDIS workforce. Figure 7 shows the proportions of workers from NDIS related occupations employed in Social Assistance Services

(the main industry classification related to the NDIS) at the time of the 2021 Census. This shows that a majority (65 per cent) of aged and disabled carers and physiotherapists work in Social Assistance Services, whereas only 8 per cent of occupational therapists and 2 per cent of audiologists/speech pathologists/therapists do. This does not account for the fact that many more allied health professionals are likely to provide services under the NDIS, but through private practice, which would fall under the Medical and Other Health Care Services industry.

Figure 7: Proportion of Queensland NDIS related occupations by ANZSIC sub industry (3-digit code)



ABS 2021, Census 2021, employment, income and education, Census Table Builder

This suggests that workforce patterns for aged and disabled carers are a reasonable proxy for patterns across disability support workers. However, data for other NDIS occupations is more useful as an indicator of potential supply of workers for the NDIS, rather than a

proxy for trends across the NDIS workforce.

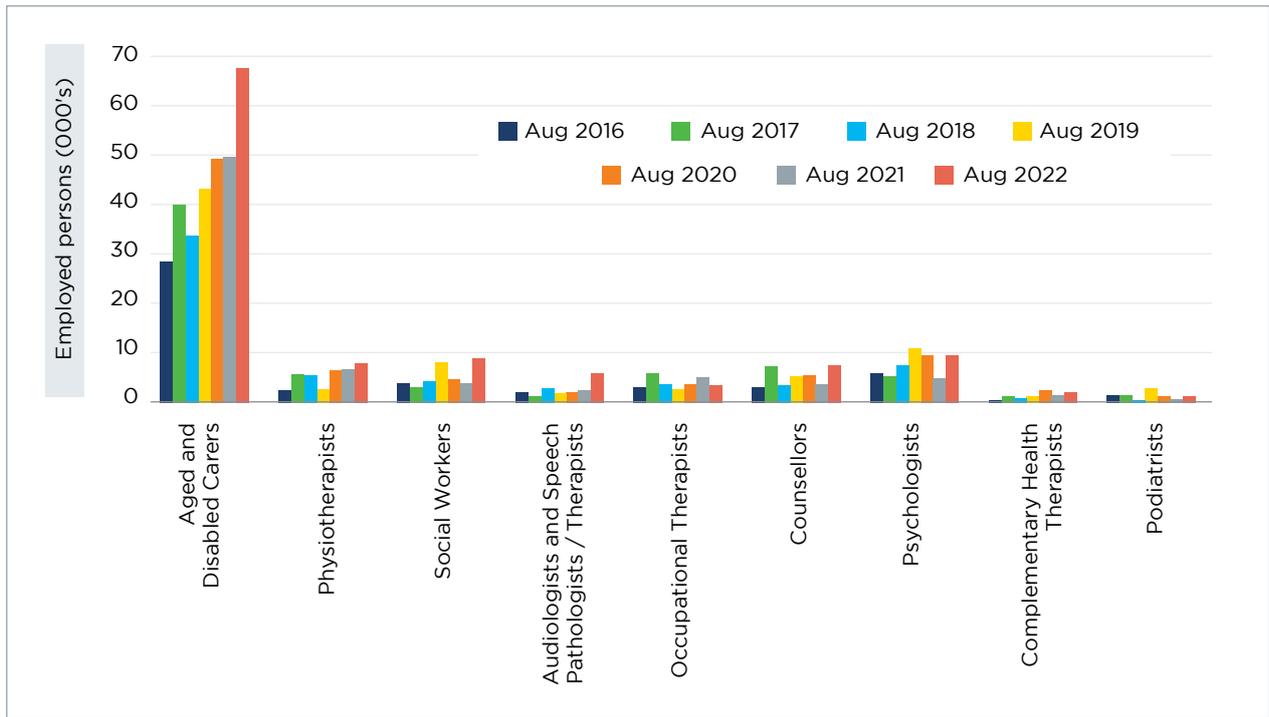
It also highlights that NDIS workforce data should be considered in tandem with qualitative information gathered from disability sector stakeholders and other disability sector primary research.

Size of the NDIS workforce

The number of aged and disabled carers in Queensland has grown steadily since the beginning of the NDIS roll-out. The most significant growth has occurred in the past year, with an increase of almost 18,000 workers between August 2021 and August 2022 (see Figure 8).

Other NDIS related occupations, such as physiotherapists and audiologists/speech pathologists, have also grown over this time, although with more mixed patterns of growth.

Figure 8: Employed persons (000's) by occupation unit group of main job (ANZSCO) Queensland August 2016 to August 2022

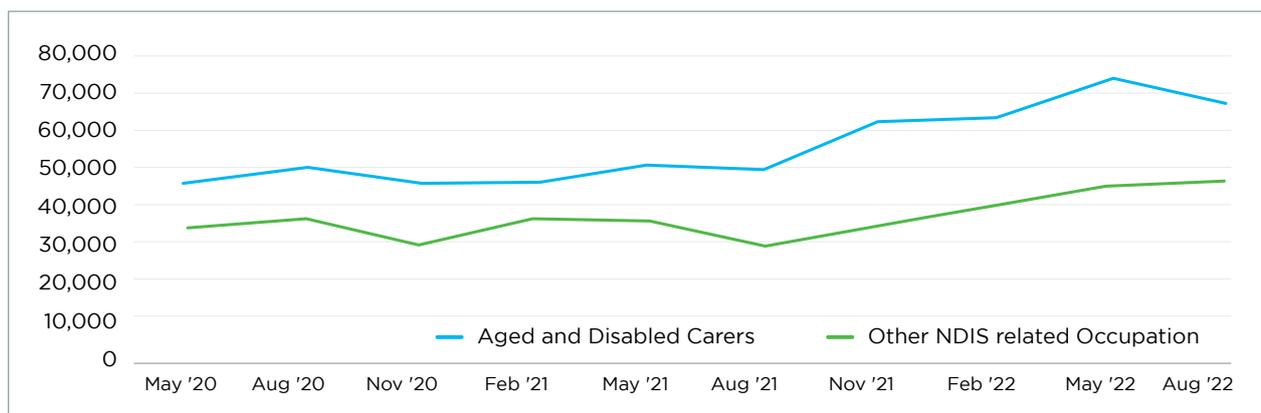


ABS 2022, Labour Force quarterly data, August 2022

ABS quarterly labour force data illustrates the significant growth that has occurred both in aged and disabled carers and in other NDIS related occupations between August 2021 and August 2022 (see Figure 9).

A drop of more than 6,000 aged and disabled carers in the August 2022 quarter is most likely a reflection of increased competition for workers across the whole labour market, with workers potentially leaving the sector for higher-paying jobs.

Figure 9: The number of aged and disabled carers compared with other NDIS occupations, Queensland, May 2020 to August 2022



ABS 2022, Labour Force quarterly data, August 2022

When compared with numbers of NDIS participants, Queensland has more aged and disabled carers per 100 participants than any state or territory aside from Tasmania. However, it has fewer than average proportions of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, audiologists/speech pathologists/therapists, psychologists and social workers (see Figure 10).

Social Workers per 100 NDIS participants is lower in Queensland than any other state or territory (see Figure 10). Social workers occupy a range of roles within the NDIS workforce, such as support coordinators and counsellors, in addition to designated social worker roles.

Figure 10: NDIS related occupations (social assistance and other residential care (excluding aged and residential care) per 100 NDIS participants Australian state comparison, Census 2021, NDIS.

Social Assistance and Other Residential Care per 100 participants (excludes Aged Residential Care)	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUST	QLD VS. AVG
Aged and Disabled Carers	63.4	52.8	64.9	63.8	63.2	97.2	55.0	48.8	61.4	3.6
Counsellors	2.6	2.8	3.0	2.2	3.9	3.8	4.8	4.0	2.9	0.1
Podiatrists	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Physiotherapists	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.6	1.1	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.5	-0.1
Occupational Therapists	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.9	1.8	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.8	-0.1
Audiologists and Speech Pathologists \ Therapists	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	-0.2
Psychologists	1.5	1.3	0.9	0.6	1.6	1.1	0.5	1.4	1.2	-0.3
Social Workers	4.1	5.1	3.6	3.8	3.8	5.0	4.7	3.9	4.2	-0.6

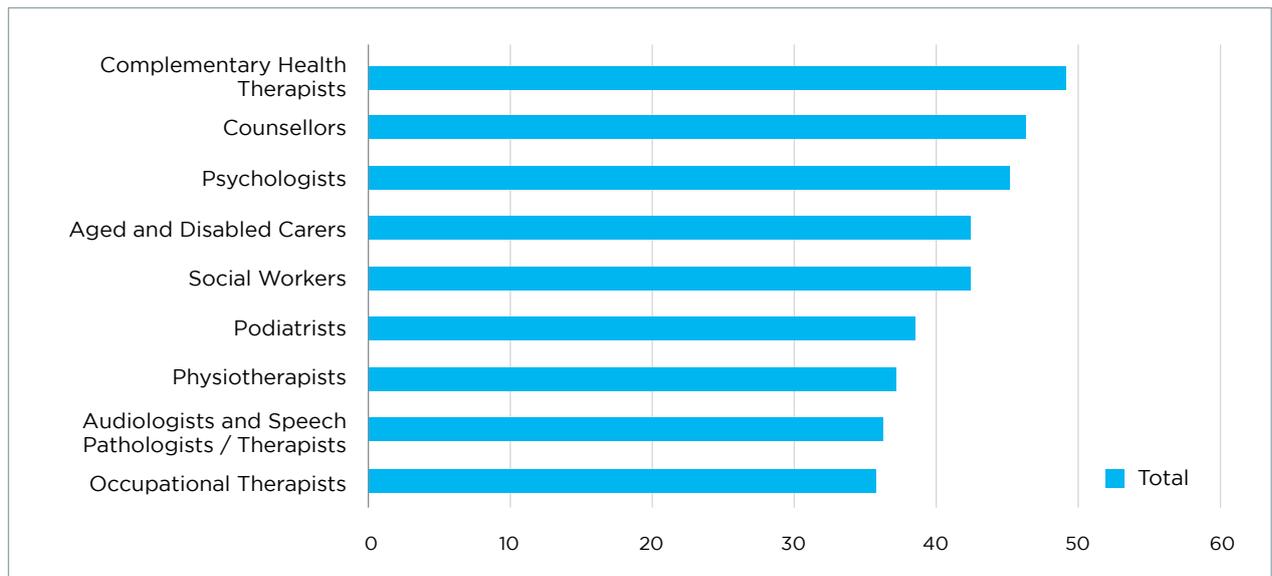
ABS 2021, Census 2021, employment, income and education, Census Table Builder

Workforce characteristics

Age

There is significant variation in the average age across different NDIS related occupations with the average for aged and disabled carers being 42, and slightly younger averages for physiotherapists (37), occupational therapists (36) and audiologists/speech pathologists/therapists (36) (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Queensland NDIS related occupations by the average age, Census 2021

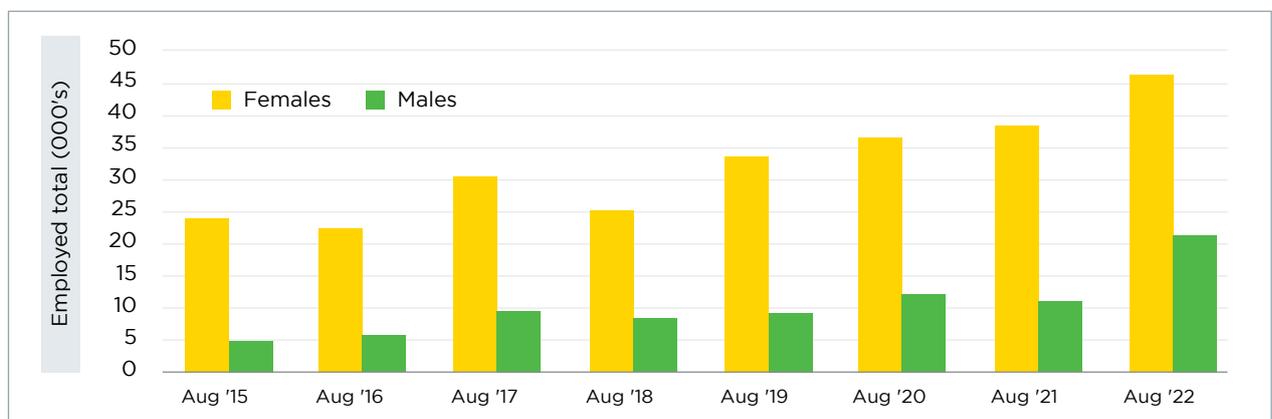


ABS 2021, Census 2021, employment, income and education, Census Table Builder

Gender

Numbers of male aged and disabled carers, who have traditionally been difficult to attract to the sector, have grown significantly, almost doubling in the past year (see Figure 12). This suggests that local and national efforts to promote support worker occupations, including to male target groups, are achieving success.

Figure 12: Aged and disabled carers in Queensland by gender, August 2015 to August 2022



ABS 2022, Labour Force quarterly data, August 2022. Employed persons by Occupation unit group of main job (ANZSCO), Sex, State and Territory

Cultural diversity

There has been a notable increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the NDIS workforce in Queensland.

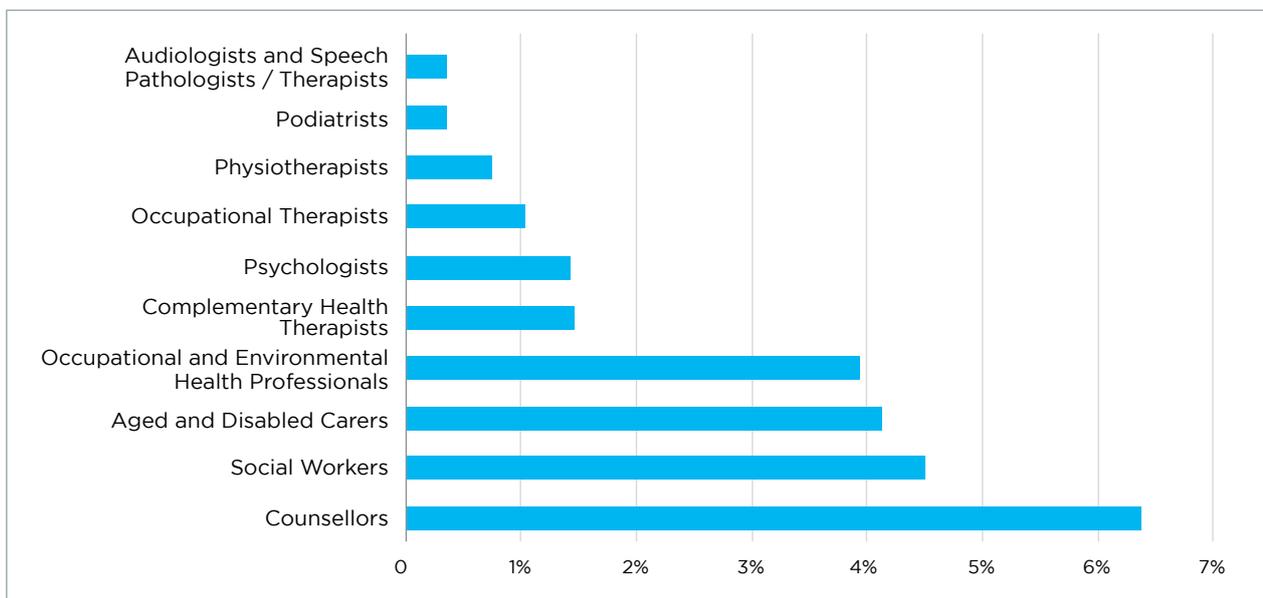
Since the 2016 Census, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers across NDIS related occupations has increased by almost 16 per cent or 331 workers (see Figure 13). In 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples made up 4.1 per cent of aged and disabled carers (see Figure 14).

Figure 13: Queensland NDIS related occupations by proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment, Census 2021 and change in number from Census 2016

NDIS Related Occupations	2016 (#)	2016 (%)	2021 (#)	2021 (%)	Change (#)	Change (%)
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	2081	2.79%	2412	3.43%	331	15.9%
Non-Indigenous	72590	97.21%	67956	96.57%	-4634	-6.38%
Grand Total	74671	100.00%	70368	100.00%	-4303	-5.76%

ABS 2021, Census 2021, employment, income and education, Census Table Builder

Figure 14: Queensland NDIS related occupations by the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers



ABS 2021, Census 2021, employment, income and education, Census Table Builder

As Census data uses a definition of cultural and linguistic diversity that is related to English language proficiency, reliable data on the further aspects of cultural diversity within the workforce is not available.



Mulungu
Health Service

STAFF

LIFE CHANGING

6. Meeting the demand for NDIS workers

Key findings

- The nature of market driven service delivery under the NDIS impacts the ability of the sector to create job security and to offer full-time roles for workers. The data shows that aged and disabled carers in Queensland work fewer hours per week on average than the workforce as a whole, while across Australia, community services and personal service workers have higher rates of underemployment than the workforce average.
- Current economic conditions are making it even harder for NDIS providers to compete for workers, and the impacts of COVID-19 continue to be felt.
- Participant numbers continue to grow and job advertisements for aged and disabled carers are surging, but numbers of aged and disabled carers are not keeping pace.
- The data aligns with reports from employers of increasing skill and labour shortages, not only for support workers and allied health professionals, but also in corporate roles such as HR and finance officers.
- Issues of workforce and service delivery continue to be a challenge in rural and remote areas. For example, data shows that the Central Queensland and Queensland – Outback regions have significantly lower ratios of aged and disabled carers to participants than the Queensland average. Innovative approaches are needed to grow the availability of skilled workers in these areas.
- Service providers are implementing a range of strategies for recruiting new employees. However, retention measures and considerations of strategies such as job redesign may be even more effective in reducing shortages. Better induction and support for new recruits is vital to minimising the loss of workers and skills from the sector.

Key factors impacting workforce demand and supply

Current economic conditions

The current economic climate is having a significant impact on the NDIS workforce. Low unemployment levels, greater competition for workers, and increased cost of living (including housing and accommodation costs), in combination with the very small margins available within NDIS pricing to increase wages, means that service providers are struggling to attract and retain workers.

The National Disability Services State of the Disability Sector 2022 report highlights that not only are disability service providers struggling to find suitably skilled workers, they are now having difficulty filling un-skilled and low-skilled positions.

This issue was also raised by stakeholders involved in initiatives under this NDIS Workforce Research Project.

“Community services lose out to other industries. For example, cleaners can be paid more for doing commercial cleaning.” Workshop participant

These findings suggest that to meet the demand for skilled workers in the sector, recruitment efforts may need to focus on groups of potential candidates that may require greater support to become skilled workers.

CSIA's Local Jobs Program in Wivenhoe, funded by the Australian Government, provides an example of the collaboration required to provide this support:

Supporting job seekers into work in the industry

The Local Jobs Program aims to place jobseekers in appropriate employment or training opportunities by bringing together key industry organisations, local and state government and Employment Services Providers to work together in developing solutions.

CSIA plays a coordination and support role for the program in the Wivenhoe region.

A program participant's story

"I am a foster Parent and have had children in my care for the past 12 years. I have been diagnosed with chronic pain, depression and anxiety. I wanted to do something to help myself and become more motivated and have more self-esteem.

I had not done a resume for 32 years, never been to a job interview, not worked for 19 years. I would be always asking "What do I do to get started?"

I contacted Salvation Army Employment. They were amazing and worked with me

to establish what sort of job would best suit my situation. There was a course to help me establish a career working in Aged Care and/or Disabilities with Wivenhoe Employment and Qld TAFE.

I jumped at the chance. I was introduced to 3 lovely companies and chose to go with Alara. I chose Alara, as my sister has been a client with Alara for 22 years. I loved watching the support workers with my sister and thought they would be an awesome company to work for. I know I can be a great support worker.

From this day on, my life, my personal self-esteem just changed. I love my job, working with both Aged Care and Disabilities as a Support Worker. It was the best career move I have ever done. I get to make people smile, I get to listen to people talk about their day, their problems, their stories and then go home and feel revived.

The caseworkers are amazing and have been supportive through the whole process. I am so ever grateful I had this opportunity to further my new career as a Support Worker."

Working hours

The marketisation of services under the NDIS can create greater choice and control for participants, but has created a higher level of insecure work across the sector and the emergence of a 'gig economy' for support workers. In this environment, NDIS service providers find it difficult to offer workers full-time and permanent part-time roles, which creates another barrier to recruitment and retention.

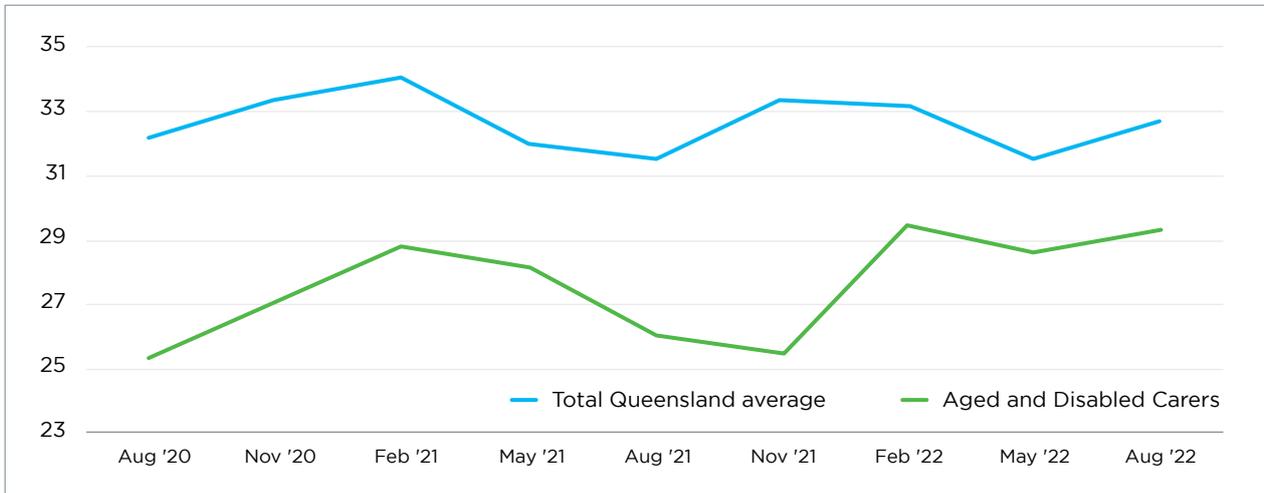
Whilst figures on employment type are not available for the Queensland NDIS workforce, data from the NDS report indicates that between 75 per cent and 80 per cent of the workforce of service providers participating in their research worked on a part-time basis⁷. By comparison, close to 70 per cent of the whole Australian workforce works on a full-time basis⁸.

This issue is evident in ABS labour force data, which shows that aged and disabled carers in Queensland work fewer hours per week on average than the workforce as a whole. However, the gap has reduced since February 2022 (see Figure 15).

7. National Disability Services (NDS) State of the Disability Sector Report 2022, p34

8. <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/understanding-full-time-and-part-time-work>

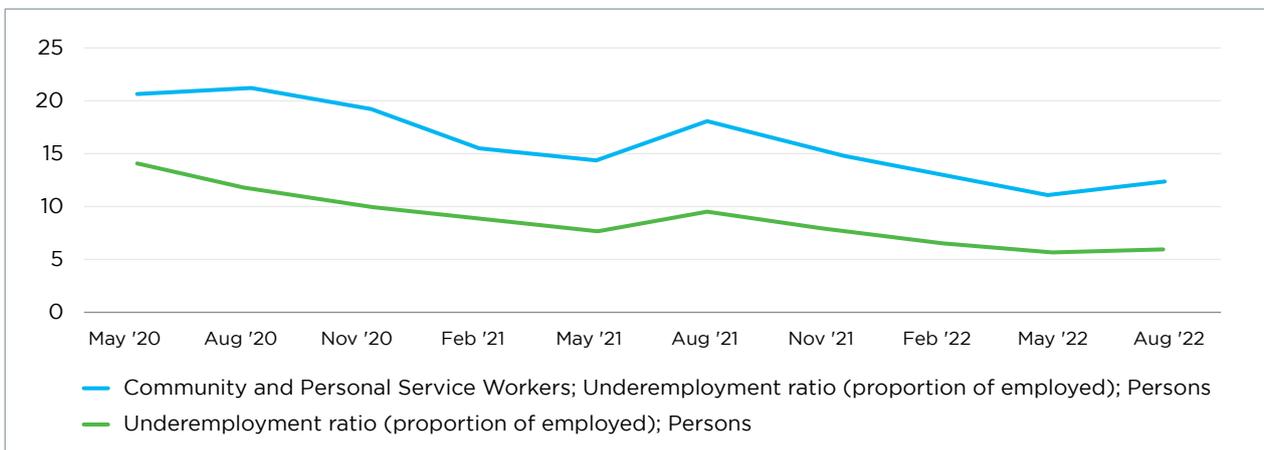
Figure 15: Hours worked per employed persons for aged and disabled carers hours per employed person Queensland average, May 2020 to August 2022, Queensland



ABS 2022, Labour Force quarterly data

Across Australia, Community and Personal Service Workers (the larger occupational group to which aged and disabled carers belong) have consistently higher proportions of workers who are underemployed when compared to the average for all workers (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Underemployment ratio comparison, community and personal service workers compared to the broader workforce May 2019 to August 2022, Australia



ABS 2022, Labour Force quarterly data

COVID-19

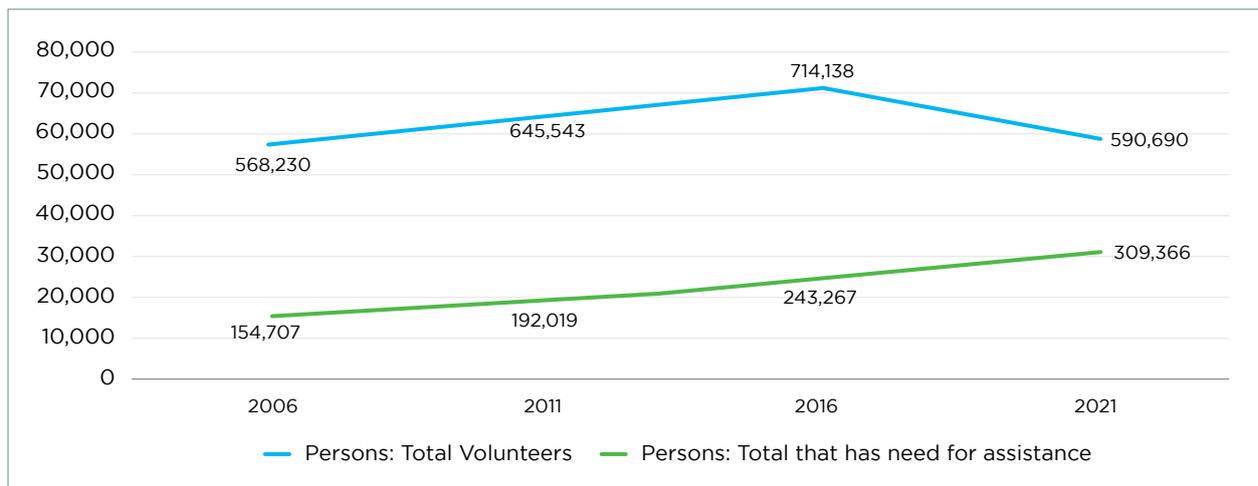
The impacts of COVID-19 continue to be felt in terms of increased sick days, costs of personal protection equipment (PPE) and some reduction in the pool of suitable job candidates due to vaccine requirements.

COVID-19 has also had a significant impact on the number of volunteers in the community, many of whom have provided unpaid assistance in the disability sector.

The 2021 Census data shows that Queensland experienced a 17 per cent decrease in the

numbers of Queenslanders who stated that they completed voluntary work with an organisation or group (see Figure 17). The previous three Census results had seen increases in volunteers both in number and proportion. At the same time, the numbers of people who require assistance with a core activity has been increasing. Volunteering can supplement paid community services work and levels of volunteering requires close monitoring to determine whether the situation is improving as the impacts of the pandemic lessen.

Figure 17: Census time-series comparison, number of persons who volunteered and persons who require assistance with a core activity comparison, 2006 to 2021, Queensland



ABS 2021, Census 2021, employment, selected dwelling characteristics, Census Table Builder

Patterns in workforce demand and supply

Aged and disabled carers

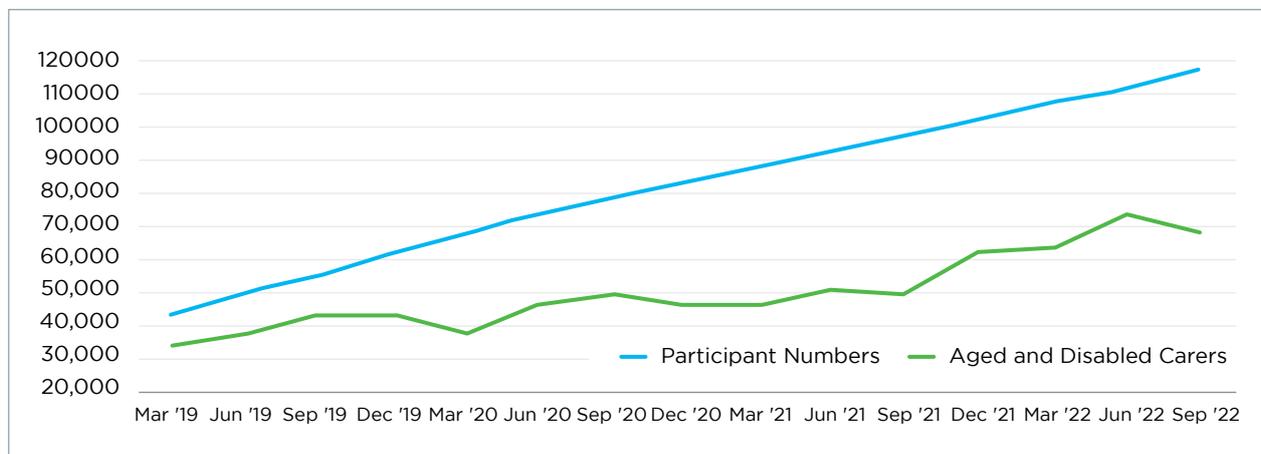
Job advertisement data provides an indicator of employer demand for workers. The Internet Vacancy Index (IVI), published by the Australian Government, highlights the growth in NDIS-relevant job ads since 2016. The IVI data show that the number of job advertisements for aged and disabled carers has grown more than three-fold since introduction of the NDIS in 2016, and particularly steeply over the period of this research. Notable surge periods have occurred from June 2020, Feb 2021 and April 2022 (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Internet vacancy index: Queensland aged and disabled carer vacancies, September 2016 to September 2022 (Actual)



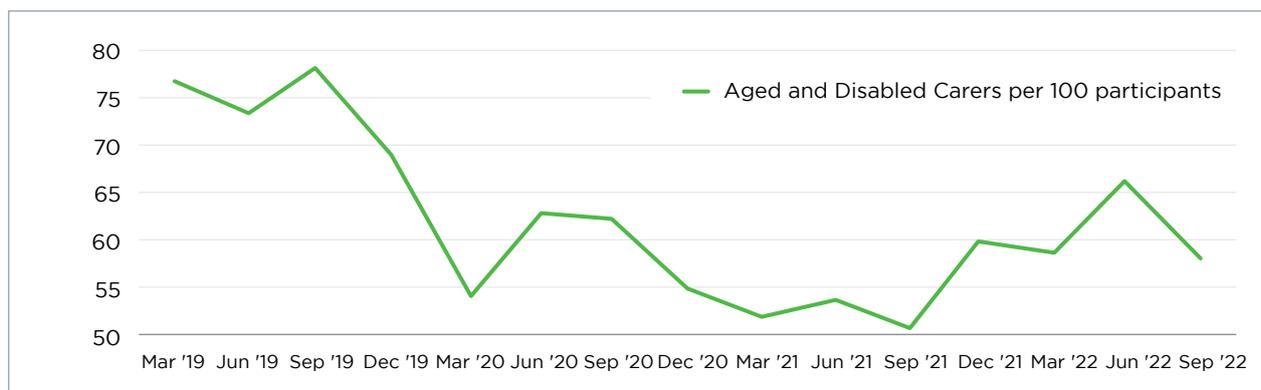
National Skills Commission, 2022, Internet Vacancy Index

Figure 19: The number of participants, number of aged and disabled carers, March 2019 to September 2022, Queensland



NDIS 2022a, Participant numbers and plan budgets data September 2022 and ABS 2022, Labour Force quarterly data, August 2022

Figure 20: The number of aged and disabled carers per 100 participants, March 2019 to September 2022, Queensland



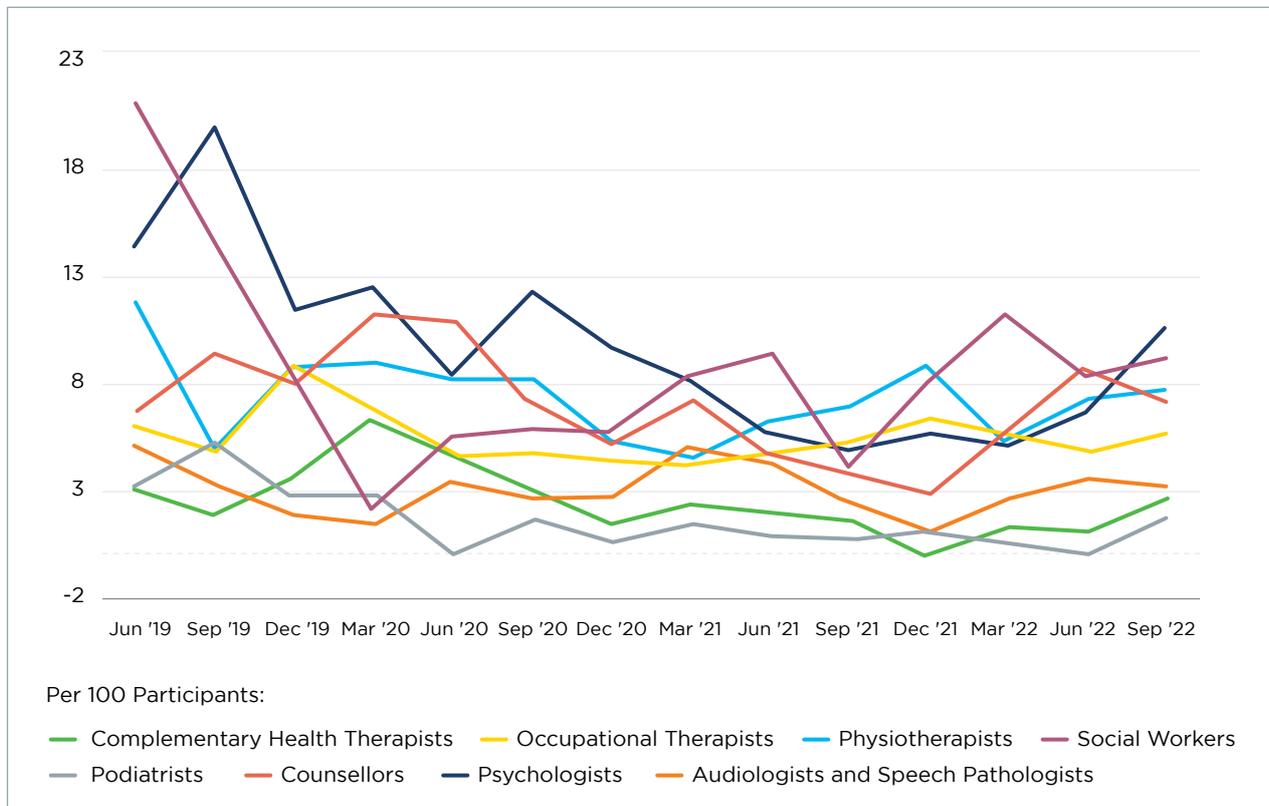
NDIS 2022a, Participant numbers and plan budgets data September 2022 and ABS 2022, Labour Force quarterly data, August 2022

Despite strong demand from employers, the supply of aged and disabled carers is struggling to keep up with the increase in numbers of NDIS participants in Queensland. There has been steady growth in numbers of participants since March 2019 (see Figure 19). However, the supply of aged and disabled carers fluctuates widely and the gap between the two is continuing to widen.

This is further illustrated when comparing numbers of carers per 100 participants. After significant declines in numbers from September 2019 and a slight upswing in numbers from September 2021, there has been a notable decrease again since June 2022 (see Figure 20).



Figure 21: Number of NDIS Occupations per 100 NDIS participants, June 2019 to September 2022



NDIS 2022a, Participant numbers and plan budgets data September 2022 and ABS 2022, Labour Force quarterly data, August 2022

This data aligns with feedback from disability sector employers about continuing shortages of allied health professionals. This challenge is even greater for service providers in regional and remote areas.

Service providers who participated in workforce planning workshops also reported difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff for finance and human resources roles.

“We struggle to fill roles such as rostering officers and schedulers who ‘cop it’ in their front facing roles on the phone all day” Workshop participant

Shortages in the NDIS workforce are also reflected in the labour supply information published by the National Skills Commission. Data from the 2022 Skills Priority List shows that aged and disabled carer occupations are experiencing shortages in Queensland, and are expected to experience strong demand nationally into the future. Physiotherapists, Podiatrists, Speech Pathologists\Therapists, Psychologists and Occupational Therapists are also experiencing shortages in Queensland, but with moderate future demand expected nationally (see Figure 22).

Other NDIS related occupations were also predicted to experience strong or moderate future demand nationally, but were not identified as currently experiencing shortages in Queensland.

Figure 22: Queensland NDIS occupations by current and future demand, 2022 skills priority list, National Skills Commission

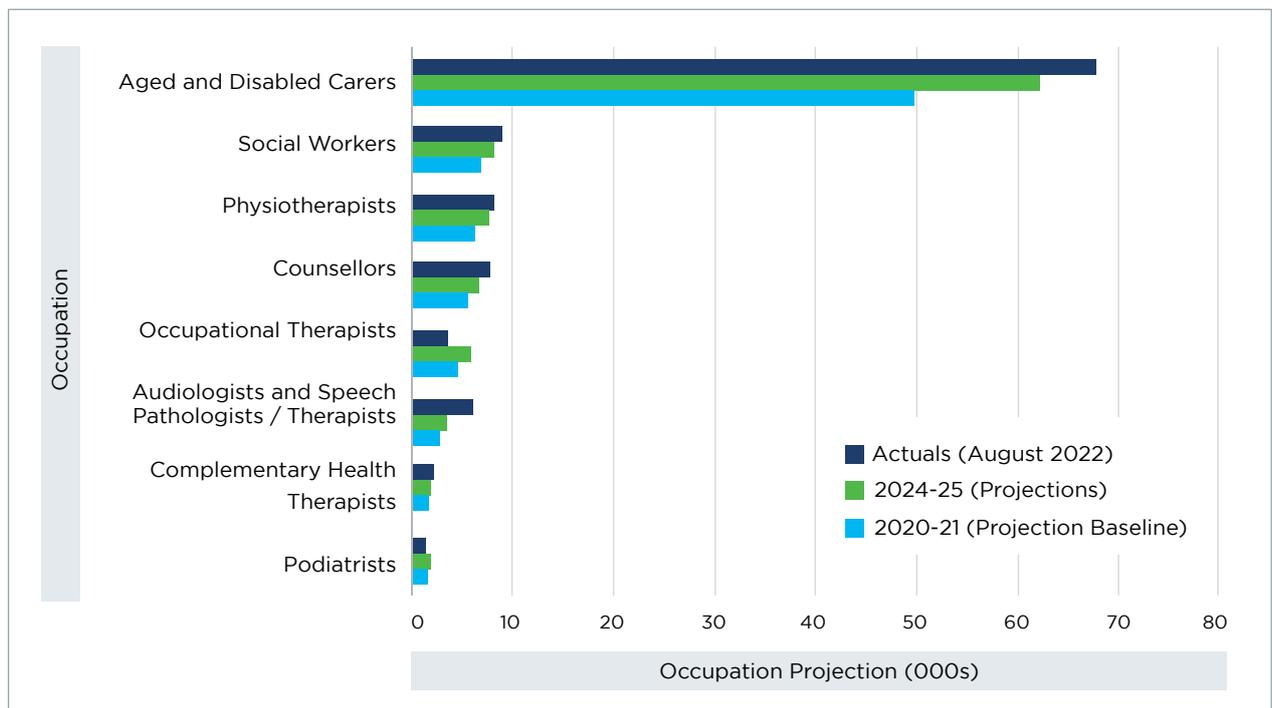
Occupation Code	Occupation	Current Supply (QLD)	Future Demand (National)
4231	Aged and Disabled Carers	Shortage	Strong
2525	Physiotherapists	Shortage	Moderate
2526	Podiatrists	Shortage	Moderate
2527	Audiologists Speech Pathologists \ Therapists	No Shortage Shortage	Moderate Moderate
2721	Counsellors	No Shortage	Moderate
2723	Psychologists	Shortage	Moderate
2522	Complementary Health Therapists	No Shortage	Moderate
2524	Occupational Therapists	Shortage	Moderate
2725	Social Workers	No Shortage	Strong

National Skills Commission 2022, Skill Priority List



Projections from Jobs Queensland (based on seasonal trends up to 2020-21) predicted robust growth for aged and disabled carers, with expectations of reaching a total of 62,000 workers in Queensland by 2024-25 (Jobs Queensland 2022). However, the significant surge that commenced in August 2021 means that actual numbers of workers have now eclipsed these projections (see Figure 23). A highpoint of 73,687 aged and disabled carers was reached in May 2022 before a recent drop to just under 68,000 (ABS 2022). Expectations have also been surpassed in some allied health occupations.

Figure 23: NDIS occupation projections, 2020-1 to 2024-5, Jobs Queensland



Jobs Queensland, Anticipating future skills data, July 2022, and ABS 2022, Labour Force quarterly data, August 2022

Patterns in regional workforces

Regional workforce projections by Jobs Queensland indicate that NDIS related occupations will continue to grow in all Queensland regions, with the highest forecast growth in workforce numbers expected in South East Queensland. The highest percentages of change are expected to occur in Ipswich, the Sunshine Coast, Logan-Beaudesert and Moreton Bay - North (see Figure 24). These regions are also expected to have the highest percentage of growth at an occupational level, along with Moreton Bay - South (see Figure 25).

Figure 24: Top projected NDIS occupations growth by SA4 Region

Number of Employed Persons NDIS Occupation by SA4	2020-21	2024-25	Change #	Change %
Ipswich	17403	20720	3317	19%
Sunshine Coast	25153	29397	4244	17%
Logan-Beaudesert	16604	19393	2789	17%
Moreton Bay-North	13370	15581	2211	17%
Moreton Bay-South	7713	8859	1146	15%
Gold Coast	37387	42920	5532	15%
Wide Bay	18127	20711	2584	14%
Central Queensland	13202	14936	1734	13%
Mackay-Isaac-Whitsundays	8996	10167	1171	13%
Townsville	17340	19562	2222	13%
Brisbane	118408	133313	14905	13%
Cairns	16906	19018	2112	12%
Outback-North	2096	2357	261	12%
Toowoomba	12425	13893	1468	12%
Far North	1844	2007	164	9%
Outback-South	1138	1238	101	9%
Darling Downs-Maranoa	6097	6605	508	8%

Jobs Queensland, Anticipating future skills data, July 2022

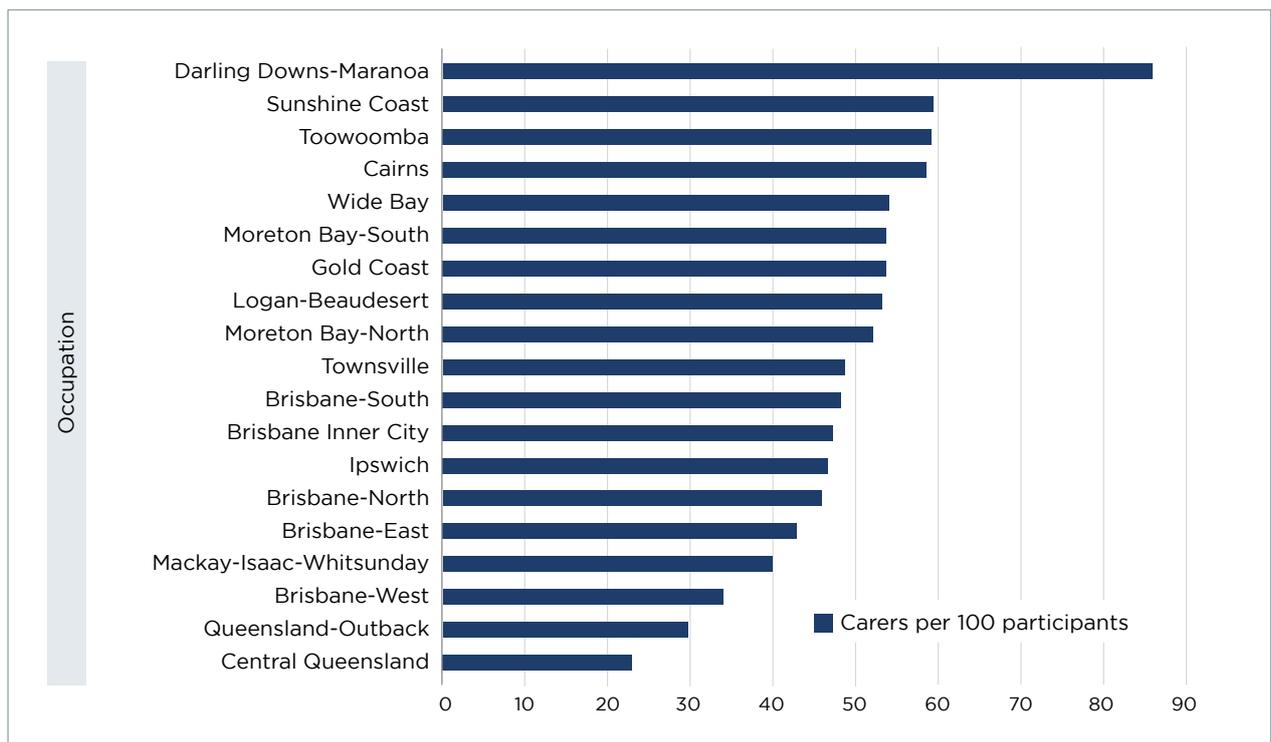
Figure 25: Top 10 occupations by SA4 by highest projected growth rate

Occupation	SA4	2020-21	2024-25	Change %
Aged and Disabled Carers	Ipswich	2916	3807	31%
Occupational Therapists	Ipswich	204	265	30%
Audiologists and Speech Pathologists\Therapists	Ipswich	123	159	29%
Aged and Disabled Carers	Logan-Beaudesert	2934	3783	29%
Aged and Disabled Carers	Moreton Bay-North	2276	2923	28%
Aged and Disabled Carers	Sunshine Coast	3955	5059	28%
Aged and Disabled Carers	Moreton Bay-South	1188	1517	28%
Occupational Therapists	Sunshine Coast	341	434	27%
Social Workers	Ipswich	355	451	27%
Occupational Therapists	Logan-Beaudesert	185	235	27%

Jobs Queensland, Anticipating future skills data, July 2022

In terms of regional workforce supply, 2021 Census data shows that in September 2021, the lowest proportions of aged and disabled carers per 100 participants were in Central Queensland (22.9) and Queensland - Outback (29.7), while Darling Downs - Maranoa had the highest (85.9) (see Figure 26). The average for the whole of Queensland at that time was 50.9 (NDIS 2022a and ABS 2022).

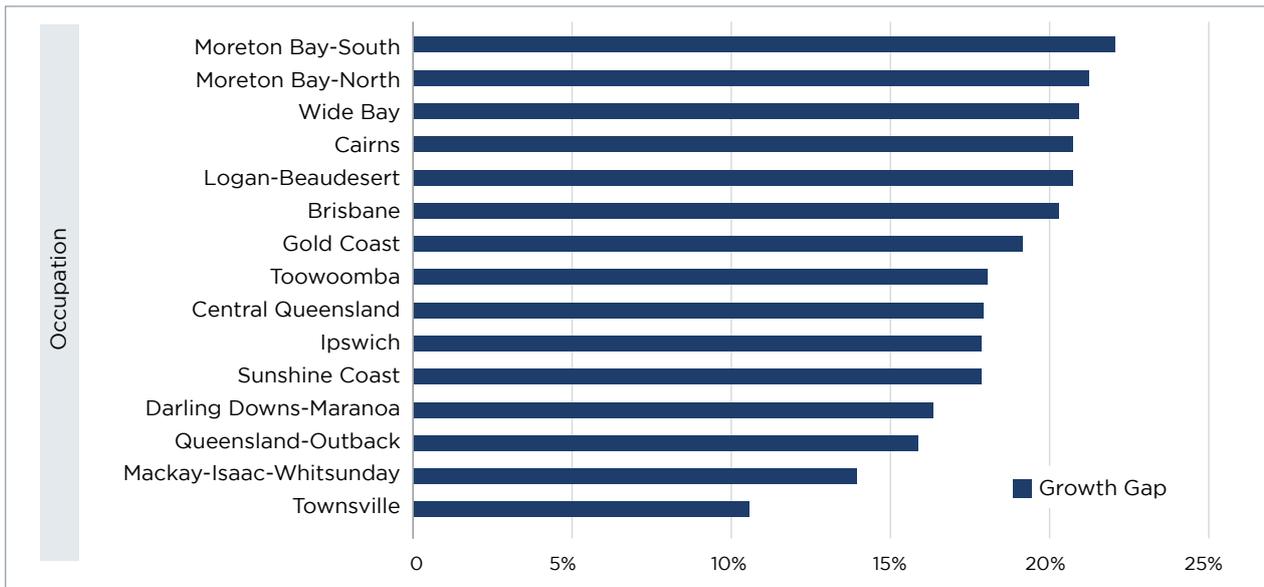
Figure 26: The number of aged and disabled carers per 100 participants, Census 2021 compared to NDIS September 2021



ABS 2021, Census 2021, employment, income and education, Census Table Builder, and NDIS 2022a Participants and plan budget data September 2021 (NDIS participant data has been concorded from NDIS district to SA4 regional proportions)

Comparisons of projected growth rates for participants and aged and disabled carers indicate that the highest disparity between demand and supply will potentially occur in Moreton Bay – South, Moreton Bay – North, Logan – Wide Bay, Cairns, (Beaudesert and Brisbane) (see Figure 27).

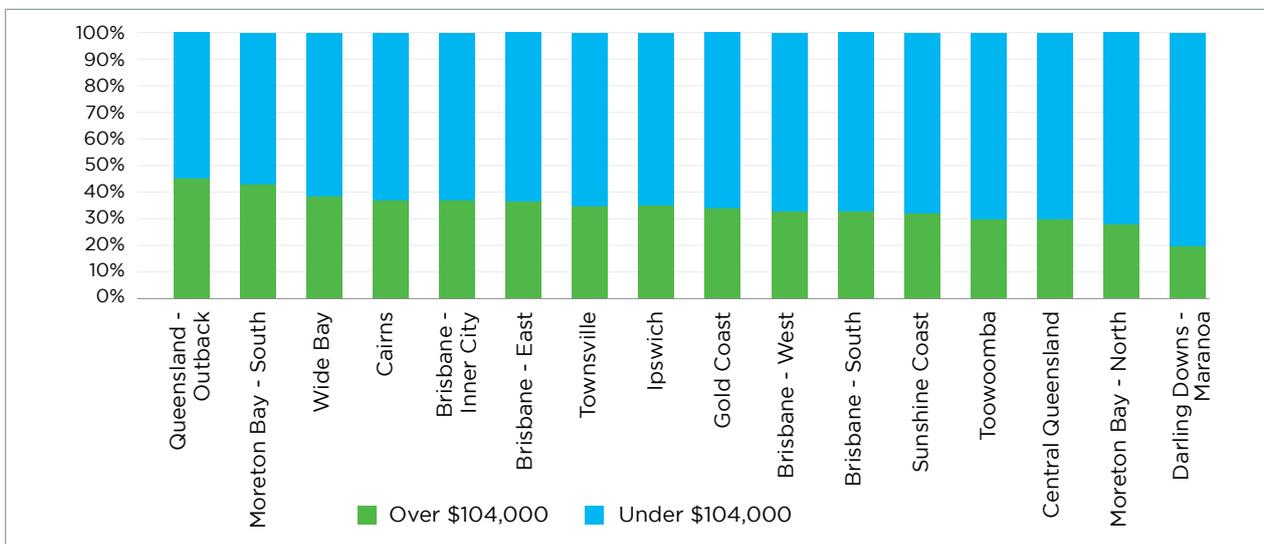
Figure 27: Participant growth rate compared to aged and disabled carer growth rate by SA4, Jobs Queensland 2020-24 projections compared to NDIS projections 2020-24



NDIS 2022e, projected participant by service district data, and Jobs Queensland, Anticipating future skills data, July 2022

Interestingly, the region in which more workers in NDIS related occupations earned higher salaries was Queensland-Outback (see Figure 28). This may reflect NDIS remote loading for remote locations supporting higher wages needed to attract workers to these regional and remote areas.

Figure 28: Proportion of NDIS related occupations that earned over \$104,000, by SA4 region, Census 2021



ABS 2021, Census 2021, employment, income and education, Census Table Builder

NDIS service delivery in rural/remote parts of Queensland remains a challenge in terms of availability of local skilled workers and the costs involved in workers from other locations travelling to deliver services, and shortage of housing to attract and house workers.

Greater use of allied health assistants has the potential to address this issue in relation to allied health services. Solutions for increasing the availability of local skilled aged and disabled carers are also continuing to be explored.

Mable - Local service delivery in rural and regional towns

Mable is an online platform that enables older Australians and people with disability to connect directly with independent care and support people in their local community.

After being invited to the small Queensland town of Bell, west of the Bunya Mountains, to help them solve their problems with lack of access to disability and home care services, Mable collaborated with the community to design a unique model of locally delivered services.

Discussions with town members helped them to realise that there were many people in the community that had skills and capacity to help their neighbours with the support they needed in looking after their homes and helping them to stay connected with the community.

Mable helped the community to set up a local not-for-profit organisation that could coordinate the provision of services needed by community members. This organisation receives half of the home care package provider fees (in partnership with a registered provider) or is paid to deliver support coordination services under the NDIS. These fees fund a co-ordinator role, and any surplus gets invested in other initiatives to support community inclusion (such as making local buildings accessible).

To address the needs of community members who need support from a skilled worker, Mable has partnered with Registered Training Organisation (RTO), Skills Generation, that can deliver

the Certificate III in Individual Support through online learning, supported by intensive face-to-face practical training sessions. Students are engaged directly by clients, via Mable, and undertake the 120 hours of supervised work needed to complete their qualification and continue as a qualified worker.

After hearing about this innovative approach through a story on ABC's Landline, other towns started to approach Mable. Some communities determined that their workers only needed a handful of specific skills in the short term, in areas such as personal care, medications, infection control and manual handling. Once again, the RTO provided intensive face-to-face training in combination with online theoretical learning. The RTO also provided any learning resources required, such as hoists, and gifted these to the community at the end of the training. Students undertaking the training receive a statement of attainment and can go on to complete the full qualification at their own pace.

These communities have not only benefited from greater access to services, but also the significant economic benefit created by local delivery of services. In Bell, approximately \$1million will be invested back into the local economy over a 12 month period through locally delivered care and support services.

This proven model has now been replicated in 9 other small communities in Queensland and two in Western Australia, with further communities due to work with Mable to implement the model next year.

Recruitment

Participants in the Workforce Planning Connect Workshops shared a range of strategies for recruiting of staff and addressing workforce and skills shortages, as does the workforce planning toolkit. Strategies include:

- Working with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to host student placements, as they provide a valuable source of potential employees
- Offering traineeships
- Recruiting unqualified workers and then upskilling them
- Offering relocation support to potential employees
- Developing the skills and capability of existing workers (e.g. through training, mentoring, coaching or communities of practice) to 'grow your own' workforce
- Redesigning or restructuring work roles to make better use of skills (e.g. cross-skilling employees to work across different roles, employing allied health assistants to support allied health professionals, scheduling work hours around employees' other commitments)
- Collaborating to implement regional job fairs and speed interviews and participating in disability roadshows and expos
- Promoting the sector and employment opportunities through working with local schools and participating in careers expos
- Tailoring recruitment approaches to target particular cohorts such as young people, mature age workers (including past employees) or people with disability, and providing necessary support in the workplace
- Employing allied health students as support workers or allied health assistants to provide a pipeline of future graduates for allied health professional roles
- Implementing employee referral programs (that reward employees for introducing new recruits)
- Sharing employees across service providers (particularly in regional and remote areas).

Retention

Retention of staff continues to be a significant challenge for many providers. People whose last role was within community and personal services consistently comprise the third highest group of unemployed people in Queensland.

The NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021-2025⁹ estimated NDIS workforce turnover for the period 2015/16 to 2017/18 to be between 17 per cent and 25 per cent – a rate that is significantly higher than the broader Healthcare and Social Assistance industry (7 per cent) and the average for all industries (12 per cent). Anecdotal evidence suggests that workforce turnover is now even higher amongst NDIS providers, particularly given the current economic climate.

Data on paid cardholders under the Yellow Card / Yellow Card Exemption / NDIS Worker Screening Check / Working with People with Disability Check programs in Queensland shows a continuing increase in the number of cardholders (see Figure 29). However, there are significantly more cardholders than there are workers across the full range of NDIS related occupations, which suggests that many cardholders are not working in the industry.

It would be valuable to investigate whether NDIS Worker Screening Check data could provide further insights into issues of employment patterns.

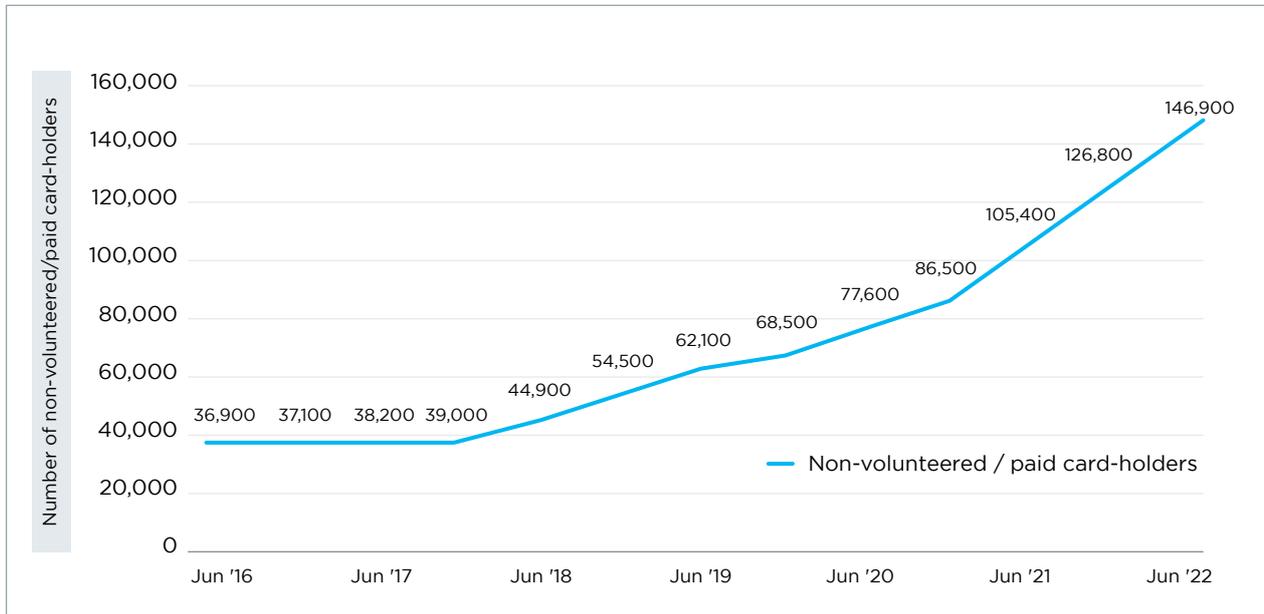


**Developing the skills
and capability of
existing workers
to 'grow your
own' workforce**

9. Available online at <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-publications-articles/ndis-national-workforce-plan-2021-2025>



Figure 29: Number of non-volunteer / paid card-holders, six-monthly, Jun 2016 to Jun 2022



Queensland Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, 2022, Yellow Card / Yellow Card Exemption / NDIS Worker Screening Check / Working with People Disability Check Cardholders

Feedback from industry stakeholders indicates that the initial weeks and months of employment for workers who are new to the industry are critical, and a time when many new recruits are lost, not only from particular service providers, but from the whole disability sector. Stakeholders have highlighted the need for robust supervision models and induction processes to support new recruits and prevent costly churn and wastage of skills from the sector.

The Workforce Planning Connect Workshops and toolkit highlighted planning tools and possible strategies for addressing other aspects of workforce retention. These include:

- Setting KPIs for retention
- Implementing wellness programs for employees
- Maintaining good communication with employees, gathering regular employee feedback and acting upon it
- Making career pathways visible and offering opportunities for further training and development
- Offering flexibility in working arrangements
- Valuing casual employees
- Recognising and appreciating employees' efforts and achievements.

7. Education and skills

Workforce considerations

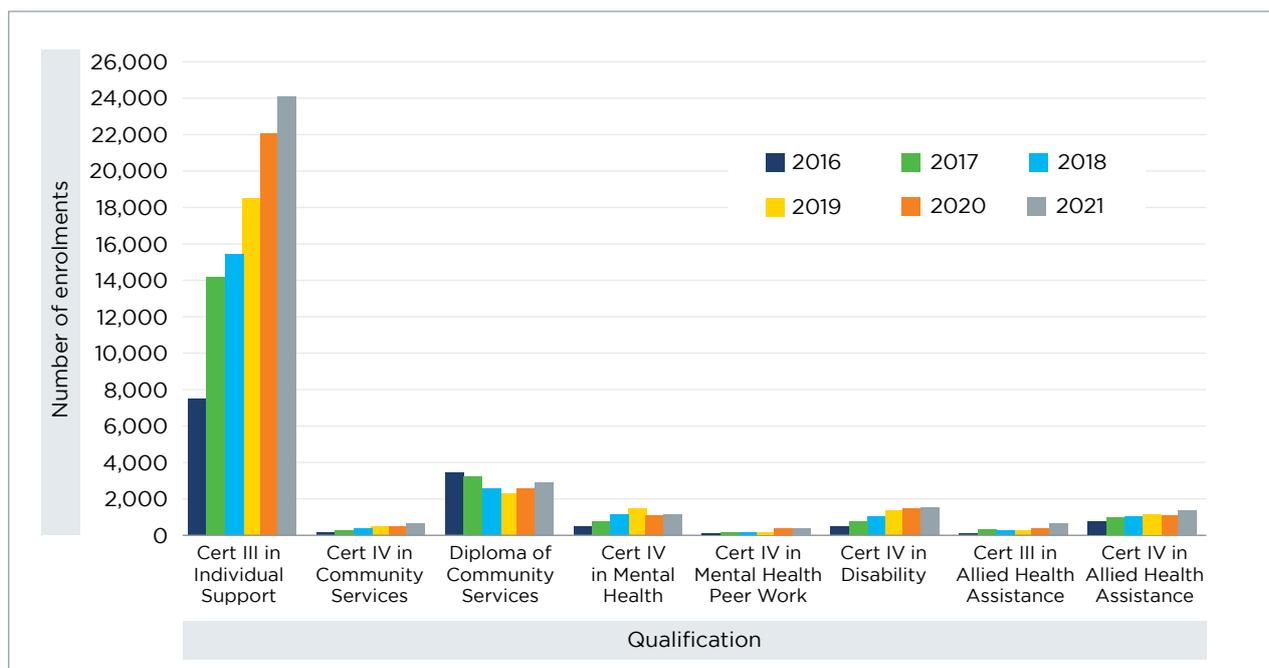
- Increasing numbers of enrolments in the Certificate III in Individual Support are encouraging. The sector needs to ensure this is capitalised upon by ensuring the candidates undertaking training are the right fit for the sector and ensuring that graduates are well supported in the workplace when they undertake work placements and commence work in the sector.
- 2021 Census data suggests that qualifications may still not be a priority for support workers in some parts of the sector.
- Declining enrolments in physiotherapy may continue to exacerbate shortages in the NDIS workforce.
- Training for the existing workforce is an issue of priority for service providers.

Training data is useful both in terms of understanding the pipeline of future NDIS workers and the level and types of skills available across the sector.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications

Data from NCVET indicates that enrolments have been increasing over the six years to 2021 for most NDIS-relevant VET qualifications (see Figure 30).

Figure 30: Queensland VET enrolments in NDIS-related qualifications, by program, 2016 to 2021



NCEVER 2022, Australian VET statistics, Data Builder

Individual Support

The most significant growth has occurred in the Certificate III in Individual Support, the most commonly held qualification of disability support workers and aged carers. As illustrated in Figure 30, over the six year period, enrolments have increased by 220 per cent, which no doubt reflects the combined efforts of government and industry in Queensland to increase the number of skilled support workers available to the sector.

Enrolments in the Certificate IV in Disability have been slowly increasing over time. However, there are currently no job roles that specifically align with this qualification and enrolments remain a fraction of those in the Certificate III.

Community Services

After initial declines, enrolments in the Diploma of Community Services have seen a resurgence since 2019 (see Figure 30), which could indicate its value as a qualification for managerial workers in the community sector as a whole. Anecdotal feedback from service providers suggests that they find it a useful training pathway for support workers moving into team leader roles.

Mental Health

Enrolments in the Mental Health and Mental Health Peer Work qualifications are comparatively smaller but have grown slowly over time (see Figure 30). Given that participants with psychosocial disability as their primary disability are the third largest group of participants in Queensland and the third fastest growing group since 2019 (NDIS 2022a), having a skilled mental health workforce is a priority.

Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) conducted research into community mental health and wellbeing workforce needs in Queensland and identified gaps in workforce skills and knowledge in relation to mental illness, recovery practice, professional boundaries, NDIS psychosocial supports and trauma informed care. As a result, the new Navigating the NDIS for the Psychosocial Workforce micro-credential has been developed for the NDIS psychosocial workforce and the wider community mental health workforce (see further information in the section on Micro-credentials).

Industry and TAFE Queensland have also worked together to improve the training of mental health Peer Workers (see example below).

Collaboration between industry and TAFE to improve training pathways

Research conducted by QAMH, the Queensland Lived Experience Workforce Network and Brisbane North Peer Participation in Mental Health Services Network, identified that students undertaking the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work were finding the course content and assessments overwhelming at times and that they would benefit from extra support to complete the course. The cost of undertaking the Certificate IV was also identified as a significant issue, as was finding valuable work placement opportunities for the course.

As a result, the Peer Workforce Student Mentoring Initiative was implemented in

partnership with TAFE Queensland and in collaboration with a Project Advisory Committee.

Two Lived Experience Peer Mentors provided individual, and group based mentoring support to students enrolled in the Cert IV Mental Health Peer Work. They also worked closely with TAFE Queensland teachers who were delivering the course at the Mooloolaba campus on the Sunshine Coast and at the Southport Campus on the Gold Coast to enrich the students' learning opportunities and to help better navigate work placements.

Scholarships have also been introduced to support peer workers to undertake this qualification.

Allied Health Assistance

The skilling of allied health assistants (AHAs) has been another priority focus during the time of this research project.

The use of AHAs in para-professional roles to support allied health professionals (AHPs), has been found to alleviate shortages of AHPs, particularly in regional and remote areas. They also provide a cost-effective means of maximising the number of allied health support hours participants can cover with their budgets, freeing up AHPs to focus on high-level therapeutic assessments and clinical services that can only be delivered by an AHP.

In regional and remote areas, AHAs can deliver services to participants under telehealth supervision from an AHP, opening up access to allied health services that participants in these areas would otherwise not receive.

Queensland Productivity Commission inquiry into the NDIS Market in Queensland recommended the Commonwealth fund a pilot for AHAs to better understand their potential usability in the NDIS market. Queensland Government also accepted this recommendation.

The resource, *The Allied Health Assistants Good Practice Guide*¹⁰, provides practical advice for service providers on the incorporation of AHA's into their workforce and business model.

Enrolments in the two Allied Health Assistance qualifications have been steadily growing, with notable increases of 42 per cent (an additional 194 enrolments) in the Certificate III and 26 per cent (an additional 287 enrolments) in the Certificate IV, between 2020 and 2021 (see Figure 30).

Micro-credentials

Outside of formal qualifications, there has been significant demand from NDIS service providers for smaller 'chunks' of learning that can help to support worker induction processes. For example, in regional Queensland, industry stakeholders proposed the idea of an induction training program that could build a common set of skills and knowledge across all NDIS workers in the region and help to reduce duplication of induction training efforts.

In response, the NDIS Workforce Fundamentals Micro-credential was developed (see description below).

NDIS Workforce Fundamentals Micro-credential

The NDIS Workforce Fundamentals is a micro-credential for workers who support people who access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). It can also be applied more broadly across the community services industry and to those delivering NDIS type supports.

Developed as part of NDIS Training and Skills Support Strategy (NTSSS) in partnership with TAFE Queensland, the micro-credential was co-designed in collaboration with an Advisory Group of NDIS providers and people with lived experience of disability.

The course is designed to be self-paced with online resources and opportunities for course participants to self-reflect throughout the learning. It aims to reduce

duplication in induction training for both the NDIS workforce and NDIS providers. It delivers critical elements considered important when inducting new workers, is portable across industry and reduces costs for organisations through shared resourcing and recognition of learner outcomes through the obtainment of a digital badge.

This non-accredited course is suitable for people starting work in the disability sector, as well as existing workers wishing to upskill or refresh their knowledge. It is also suitable for job seekers and those workers transitioning from other industries, and it provides an opportunity for those considering entering the workforce to understand better the roles and responsibilities of those who work in disability and community services.

10. Available at <https://csialtd.com.au/2022/04/22/introducing-the-allied-health-assistants-good-practice-guide/>

Of the 272 enrolments during the period February to August 2022, more than half also completed the micro-credential during that time (see Figure 31). Enrolment data shows that almost one-third of learners during that period were existing workers in NDIS related services, suggesting that the micro-credential is meeting a need for upskilling (see Figure 32). The next most common groups of learners were students (18%) and job seekers (16%).

Figure 31: NDIS workforce fundamentals micro-credential enrolments and completions, February to August 2022

Enrolment metric	Number
Total enrolments	272
Total completed	144

TAFE Queensland

Figure 32: NDIS workforce fundamentals micro-credential enrolments and completions, February to August 2022

Employment	Number	%
Existing worker (NDIS related service)	83	31%
Student	49	18%
Seeking employment in Community Services or NDIS related service	44	16%
New worker (NDIS related service)	40	15%
Other	28	10%
Existing worker (non-NDIS related service)	22	8%
Not provided	6	2%
Total	272	100%

TAFE Queensland

A micro-credential has also been developed to support the induction of workers delivering psychosocial disability supports (see description below).

Navigating the NDIS for the Psychosocial Workforce micro-credential

The aim of this course is to support the induction of new staff into the community mental health workforce, as well as assist other stakeholders supporting people experiencing mental health and wellbeing challenges.

Developed as part of NTSSS, the Navigating the NDIS for the Psychosocial Workforce micro-credential is a two-hour training resource developed in collaboration with Queensland Alliance for Mental Health, TAFE Queensland, the former consortium WorkAbility Qld (through CSIA) and Industry.

An advisory group of key stakeholders including representation from QAMH

membership guided the development, pilot and delivery of the micro-credential.

The Micro-credential is a highly interactive online course developed to engage learners using a strength-based and cross-cultural focus.

It uses innovative methods to educate learners through the delivery of animations that bring real-world scenarios and situations to life that workers might face and offers opportunities for reflective practice.

It offers flexible training options that allow learners to work at their own pace – whether at work, at home, on their computer or mobile device awarding a digital badge on completion as proof of achievement.

Traineeships

As highlighted in the Strengthening Queensland's NDIS Workforce 2021 report, more disability sector employers are now using traineeships as an employment pathway, and changes to funding arrangements have enabled existing worker traineeships to be used as an upskilling pathway for employees.

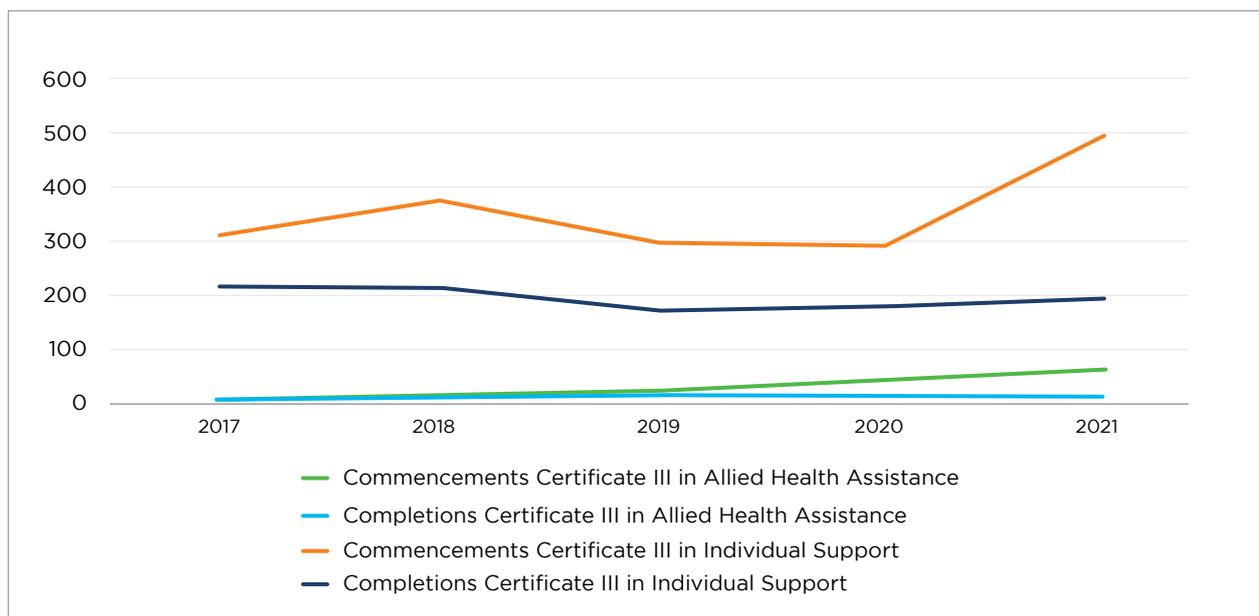
This is evident in NCVET traineeship data, which shows an increase of 68 per cent in Queensland traineeship commencements (an additional 200 trainees) for the Certificate III in Individual Support between 2020 and 2021 (see Figure 33). Whilst this data combines

commencements for traineeships from the three streams of aged care, disability support and home care, the growth trajectory aligns with reports from disability sector stakeholders that traineeships are becoming more common.

The number of traineeship completions has hovered around 200 per year between 2017 and 2021 (see Figure 33).

Traineeships in the Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance have slowly grown over this period, from 10 commencements in 2017 to 60 commencements in 2021. There have been 15 completions per year from 2019 to 2021 (see Figure 33).

Figure 33: NDIS related traineeship commencements and completions, Queensland, 2017 to 2021



NCVER 2022, Australian VET statistic, Data Builder

An ongoing challenge for the disability sector is that the casualised and unpredictable nature of disability support work creates a barrier to the use of traineeships, as current arrangements require trainees to be employed in regular part-time hours. The Strengthening Queensland's NDIS Workforce 2021 recommended that industry work with the Queensland Government to establish a new customised traineeship pathway for entry level roles in disability support that addresses, amongst other factors, eligibility for casual or part-time workers.

As part of the work to investigate traineeship pathways, Jobs Queensland commissioned research into the use of group training by the disability sector.

Group training is an approach to skilling workers in which an organisation called a group training organisation (GTO) employs a person, enrolls them in a traineeship and 'hosts' them out to employers to undertake learning in the workplace. Under the group training model, the administrative burden for

service providers is much less than for direct employment traineeships and there are options for trainees to be shared or transferred across service providers. The GTO also manages the recruitment process and provides the trainee and the host employer with support throughout the traineeship to ensure successful completion.

The research found that very few service providers are using group training to deliver Certificate III in Individual Support disability traineeships. This appears to be mainly due to a lack of awareness of this model and its benefits within the sector.

The final report from this research recommends greater promotion of the group training model and further work to pilot the model with groups of potential disability support workers who would benefit from the additional support this model provides.

The resource, *A Guide to NDIS Traineeships Using Group Training*¹¹ can help service providers to better understand this training and employment model and how it can help them with workforce development.

11. Available at <https://csialtd.com.au/2022/09/09/a-guide-to-ndis-traineeships-using-group-training/>

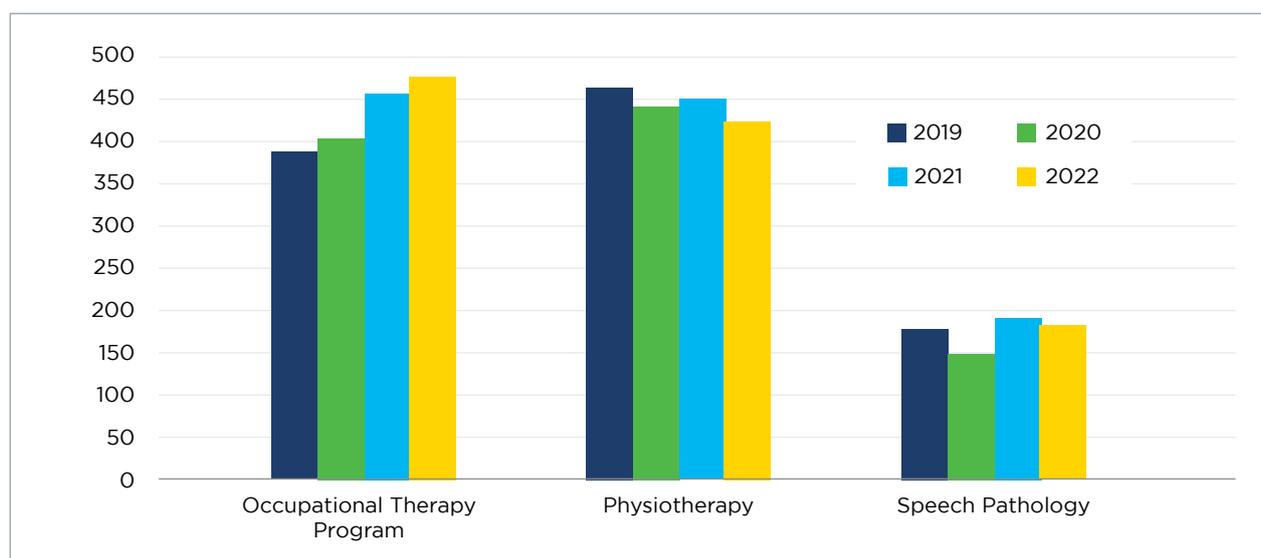
Higher education qualifications

Data from the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre indicates that enrolments in occupational therapy programs have steadily increased over the last four years, while enrolments in speech pathology programs have been relatively static (see Figure 34).

Fluctuations in the overall enrolment trajectories are evident in 2020, which is likely a result of the impact of COVID-19 on university enrolments across the board.

Physiotherapy programs are showing a moderate decrease over time, which is likely to further exacerbate shortages under the NDIS. This highlights the importance of ongoing work around allied health assistants as described above.

Figure 34: Allied health bachelor program enrolments, Queensland universities, semester 1, 2019 to 2022



Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre, 2022

Educational attainment across the NDIS workforce

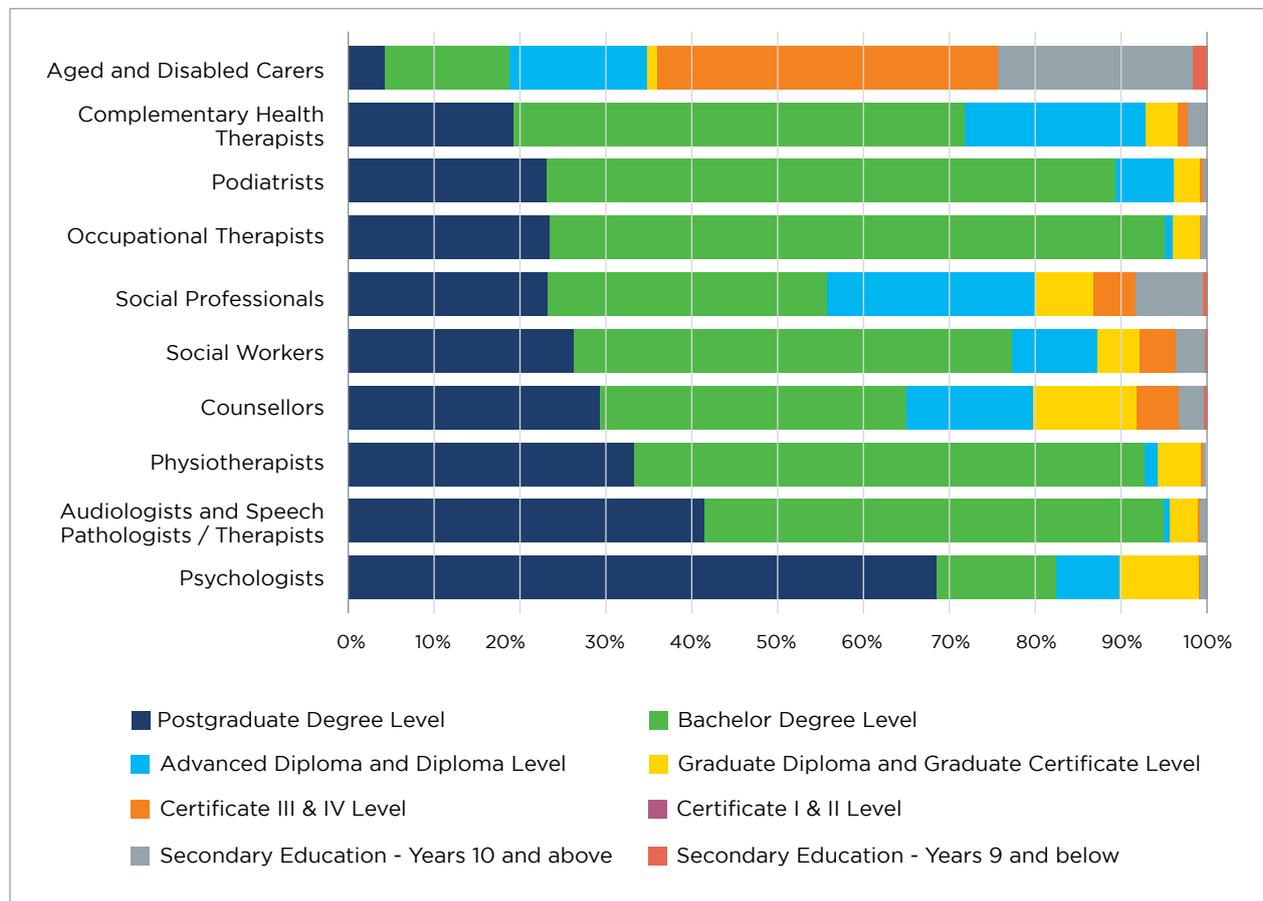
As would be expected, Census data shows that the largest proportion (40 per cent) of aged and disabled carers hold a Certificate III or IV level qualification, while allied health professionals overwhelmingly hold Bachelor or Postgraduate Degrees (see Figure 35). Interestingly, 25 per cent of aged

and disabled carers do not hold a post-school qualification (ABS 2021). Although this is a slight decrease since the 2016 Census, the data suggests that qualifications are still not a priority in parts of the disability sector.

Comparisons with 2016 Census data also show that levels of educational attainment have been increasing across all NDIS related occupations (ABS 2021).



Figure 35: NDIS related occupations level of educational attainment, Census 2021, Queensland



ABS 2021, Census 2021, employment, income and education, Census Table Builder

Training for the existing workforce

At the time of the 2021 Census, 86 per cent of workers in NDIS related occupations were not undertaking any institutional education and training. This is higher than average of 74 per cent across the whole Queensland workforce (ABS 2021).

Feedback from service providers involved in recent industry roundtables indicates that lack of training for the existing workforce is an issue. They called for greater investment in the upskilling and cross-skilling of existing workers, including through in-house training. Participants in the Workforce Planning Connect workshops also noted that insufficient budget and time for training staff was an issue. They identified areas of particular skill gaps, that included:

- Digital skills, including skills for using new technology to capture data
- Report writing and note writing that meets compliance requirements
- Written literacy skills
- Cultural capacity building
- Training for support coordinators
- Understanding and navigating the new Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHADS) Industry Award.

There also appears to be a need for further support for service providers in the area of workforce planning. The majority of participants in the Boosting the Local Care Workforce 'look-see at Workforce Planning for care and support services' indicated they would be interested in follow-up activities related to workforce

planning. This included interest in the workforce planning workshops, a workforce planning peer support group/community of practice, and further activities on workforce planning for different contexts (e.g. CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Remote locations) and different stages of the workforce planning process.

Feedback from service providers who were interested, but unable to attend the Workforce Planning Connect Workshops indicated that pressing work commitments, workforce shortages and COVID-19 impacts prevented them from participating. These issues are likely to be continuing barriers to training of the existing workforce, along with budget constraints for training that has an associated cost.

Participants in the Workforce Planning Connect workshops had some suggestions for addressing barriers to training, such as:

- Pooling resources across local organisations to conduct regional training events
- Developing online learning hubs
- Implementing more in-house training, including having in-house trainers/assessors to lead training and identify staff training needs
- Providing mobile training vehicles/units with beds, simulators and Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG) feeding equipment that can be used to support and reduce the cost of training in regional and remote areas.

The development of business skills to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to establish local services for NDIS participants also remains a priority (see example below).

Supporting the establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NDIS services

The NDIS Business Development Seminar series commenced in March 2022 to support the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business capability, in order to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NDIS participants in Queensland. By the end of the project in June 2023, almost 60 seminars will have been delivered either face-to-face or online.

In partnership with CSIA, the seminar series has been designed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to ensure respectful engagement with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and

community stakeholders and culturally appropriate delivery of NDIS and business information.

The project has had to develop culturally appropriate resources to provide information about the NDIS as very few suitable resources were already available, and has found that some communities are still in the very early stages of understanding of the NDIS and are not yet ready to engage in capability building.

In those communities that have been ready to engage, seminar participants have expressed appreciation for the experience of the trainers, for having NDIS experts in the room and hearing from businesses with NDIS experience. They also valued the simplified NDIS information and customised business tools, as well as the support to work through individual barriers.

A story of personalised support

Aunty Mary attended one of the face-to-face NDIS Business Development Seminars in June. She wasn't sure initially if the seminar was really for her and maybe she would just stay for part of the day.

For much of Aunty Mary's life she has worked providing disability support. She is passionate about her career and helping others but feels that organisations she has worked for don't train the staff well, take shortcuts and don't care enough about the clients.

During the seminar one of the trainers sat beside Aunty Mary, asking about her mob, her work, her goals and her dreams. She said she would love to be her own boss,

so she could have more control over the quality of her clients' care. But she didn't know if it was possible, or how to go about it, or if she was too old to even try.

The trainer let Aunty know she can run her own business as an NDIS service provider and support people directly, rather than work for an organisation. They sat down together there and then and set Aunty up with a business logo, a business email, an ABN, an invoice system and a description of the services she wants to provide.

Aunty was so pleased that she now had set up the basics to run a business. The trainer and Aunty Mary continue to get together to help progress the business, including building her online profile and listing her business with a brokerage service.



8. Policy environment

Several current and upcoming activities in the policy environment will also impact the NDIS workforce. These include:

- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031: Policy Priority 1, under the outcome area of Employment and Financial Security, is focused on increasing employment of people with disability. A Commonwealth Government action in the associated Employment Targeted Action Plan is to partner with industry to trial pilot programs that connect Disability Employment Services participants to jobs in sectors that are experiencing skill shortages (Employment TAP 1.8).
- *National Disability Strategy 2021 - 2031*: Policy Priority 1, under the outcome area of Employment and Financial Security, is focused on increasing employment of people with disability. One of the action areas under this priority is funding for employment pilots that partner with industry to connect Disability Employment Services participants to jobs in sectors that are experiencing skill shortages.
- Changes in industrial relations arrangements for the sector, including the SCHADS Award Review.
- Development of a national Employment White Paper that will build on the outcomes of the Jobs and Skills Summit, with a focus on employment, productivity growth and women's economic participation and equality.
- *Queensland's Disability Plan 2022-27, Together, a better Queensland*: is the state's commitment to meeting the policy priorities of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 over the next five years, including the priority of increased employment of people with disability.
- *Good People, Good Jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022 - 2032*: includes amongst its strategies a focus on workforce participation and diversity and workforce attraction and retention, locally focused and led workforce planning and initiatives, the introduction of Industry-Based Workforce Advisors, extension of the Micro-Credentialing Pilot Program and a review of the Queensland VET Investment Plan.
- Queensland's *Paving the Way - the First Nations Training Strategy*: has three focus areas for action - Indigenous-led training and workforce solutions; Skills and training pathway opportunities and support that meet local workforce needs; and cultural awareness skills and competency.
- *Queensland Productivity Commission Inquiry into the NDIS Market*: examines the structural, regulatory and other impediments to the efficient operation of the NDIS market and provided an extensive list of findings and recommendations in their final report. the Queensland Government response to the final report identifies how it will utilise the report to advocate for and implement recommendations to achieve a high performing scheme underpinned by an improved workforce.



Good People, Good Jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy, focuses on workforce participation and diversity and workforce attraction and retention

9. The future of Queensland's NDIS workforce



Action area 1: Workforce planning and development

1.1 Address high turnover rates and retain skilled workers within the sector by:

- NDIS service providers, with support from Government, working together to design solutions that improve mentoring and support for new workers in the sector and improve the skills of workplace supervisors.
- Industry stakeholders, with support from Government, working together to make NDIS career pathways more visible, linked to opportunities for training and professional development for existing workers.

1.2 Target and support harder to reach groups and increase diversity of the workforce through the creation of new attraction and recruitment pipeline.

This may include:

- Collaboration with support from Government between industry stakeholders and First Nations peoples to build capacity for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NDIS participants
- Industry stakeholders further investigating barriers to employment in the sector (e.g. accessibility of worker screen checks, access to transport, skills issues) for particular cohorts of potential workers (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, migrants and other people from CALD backgrounds, mature age workers, people who are long term unemployed) and identifying strategies needed to address these
- Industry stakeholders identifying where provision of government-funded, targeted wrap-around support could assist new workers to successfully build their skills and enter the NDIS workforce
- Industry stakeholders and group training organisations promoting the use of group training as a means of providing greater support to those who need it
- Place-based initiatives with particular attention to markets where workforce shortages result in the under-provision of NDIS supports
- Collaboration between industry stakeholders and lived experience organisations to increase employment of people with disability within the NDIS workforce
- Industry stakeholders working with individual NDIS service providers to develop specific strategies for increasing the inclusiveness and diversity of their workforce.

1.3 Ensure promotional activities are linked to clear education and employment pathways. This may involve:

- Industry stakeholders identifying opportunities to connect existing promotional initiatives (such as the national *A Life Changing Life* campaign) with tools or mechanisms that link interested people with training and employment opportunities (e.g. suitability assessment, advice about training and career pathways, etc.)
- Development and implementation of a Queensland-based initiative like the NSW *More Jobs More Care* program.

1.4 Continue to promote and support the use of allied health assistants (AHAs) by:

- Industry stakeholders further promoting the good practice guide to the sector
- Industry stakeholders and NDIS service providers, with support from Government, conducting an action research pilot to demonstrate the benefits and use of AHAs in rural/remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and areas of thin markets, including development of business cases, and governance, risk and cost models.

1.5 Investigate options for skilled migration to assist with addressing shortages in professional occupations with the NDIS workforce.

- Industry stakeholders contributing to national discussions about possible migration settings to support areas of shortage in the NDIS workforce



Action area 2: Training and skills

2.1 Continue industry-led and government-enabled work to design and implement training solutions that meet the needs of the sector, including:

- Designing a traineeship model that supports the casual and irregular part-time hours of disability support workers.
- Piloting the use of group training to deliver traineeships for hard to reach groups and/or in rural/remote areas.
- Developing further micro-credentials as necessary to meet identified industry needs
- Implementing cultural competency training for NDIS workers delivering supports to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

2.2 Continue to encourage and support NDIS service providers to adopt more strategic approaches to workforce planning, attraction, recruitment, retention and job design by:

- Industry stakeholders continuing to deliver workshops and seminars that build the knowledge and skills of service providers, as well as leading the introduction of communities of practice around particular aspects of workforce planning.



Action area 3: Contribution to policy development

3.1 Advocate for and contribute to the development and availability of better workforce data. This may include:

- Industry stakeholders advocating for clearer delineation of the NDIS workforce within occupational data as part of the upcoming ANZSCO review.
- Industry stakeholders contributing to work on the National Disability Data Asset.

3.2 Contribute to national policy related to the establishment of an appropriately skilled and sized NDIS workforce. This should include:

- Industry stakeholders actively participating in Part 2 of the National NDIS Review to advocate on workforce issues such as wages and conditions, better retention and career pathways, raising the profile of work in the sector, supervision and training and professional development for the sector.
- Submission of this workforce research report to the review.
- Investigation into whether data on NDIS Worker Screening Checks can provide any further insights into the NDIS workforce.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Capacity Building Supports: A support that enables a NDIS participant to build their independence and skills.

Capital Supports: An investment, such as assistive technologies - equipment, home or vehicle modifications, or for Specialist Disability Accommodation.

Core Supports: Supports that enable NDIS participants to complete activities of daily living.

Employability Skills: Ability to perform and innovate in the workplace.

Forum: Designated meeting where views and ideas can be expressed and shared.

Internet Vacancy Index (IVI): The IVI is based on a count of online job advertisements newly lodged on three main job boards (SEEK, CareerOne and Australian JobSearch) during the month.

NDIS: The National Disability Insurance Scheme was initiated by the Australian Government for Australians with a disability (including intellectual, physical, sensory and psycho-social disabilities).

NDIS Participants: Persons with a disability recognised under the NDIS and eligible for NDIS support.

NDIS Service Providers: Organisations and sole traders providing services subsidised or supported by the NDIS.

NDIS Worker Screening Check: An assessment of whether a person who works, or seeks to work, with people with disability poses a risk to them. The assessment determines whether a person is cleared or excluded from working in certain roles with people with disability.

NDIS Workforce: The human capital delivering or supporting the provision of NDIS funded services.

Non-accredited Training: Training which does not form part of a nationally recognised VET or higher education qualification.

Primary Research: New data collected by a person or group directly, rather than being reliant on data collected by others.

Vocational Education and Training (VET): Formal learning that directly relates to getting a job.

Qualitative Research: Primary research involving collecting non-numerical data through mediums, such as asking open ended questions.

Appendix 2: Reference List

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