

# WANADA Workforce Development Proposal - December 2021

## Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work, and recognise their strength in connection to the land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present.

We acknowledge the widespread and intergenerational effects of colonisation. The policy and actions of dispossession established long-lasting barriers between peoples, land and their culture. Furthermore, we acknowledge that this trauma has a systemic presence in Western Australian society, policy and the alcohol and other drug system. We acknowledge the need to address this issue by re-evaluating the systems in place which affect the cultural, social and economic matters of Aboriginal people.

WANADA is committed to advancing conciliation/reconciliation and fostering the valuable contributions that Aboriginal people make in the alcohol and other drug service sector, to deliver meaningful, lasting outcomes for Aboriginal people, families, and communities.

## About WANADA

The Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA) is the peak body for the alcohol and other drug education, prevention, treatment and support sector in Western Australia. WANADA is an independent, membership-driven not-for-profit association.

WANADA is driven by the passion and hard work of its member agencies, which include community alcohol and other drug counselling; therapeutic communities; residential rehabilitation; intoxication management and harm reduction services; peer based; prevention; and community development services.

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## Foreword: WANADA's response

The alcohol and other drug sector is experiencing significant recruitment and retention issues, exacerbated by the pandemic. There is a shared appreciation for urgent action to: promote career options into the sector; develop entry level attraction strategies; enhance inclusive recruitment options; and support the implementation of evidence-informed retention practices.

The proposed initiatives outlined in this submission have been developed as a result of discussion regarding workforce development issues at the Community Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Council on Tuesday 7 December 2021. The proposed initiatives are funder neutral. There is potential for coordinated or co-commissioning arrangements to support the systemic range of initiatives required. In this spirit, WANADA has lodged this business case with both the Western Australian Mental Health Commission and the Western Australian Primary Health Alliance.

The proposed initiatives put forward by WANADA have been informed by, and build upon:

- a systemic approach to workforce development, as outlined in WANADA's *Comprehensive Alcohol and other Drug Workforce Development in Western Australia: Full Report*
- recommendations, outcomes and learnings from WANADA's workforce development activities in 2021
- select consultations with available sector representatives.

The proposed initiatives offered in this document align with, or contribute to the achievement of, key government strategies.

## Overview: WANADA'S proposal in brief

WANADA's proposal outlines a comprehensive approach to increasing the AOD sector's workforce. The range of initiatives need to be considered for a systemic approach to achieving workforce expansion and service sustainability. As an underlying principle, each of these initiatives would include specific consideration of: a) people with relevant personal experience (including service users and family members); b) Aboriginal people; c) students; and d) regional workforce.

Initiative and brief description	Responsibility
<p><b>1. Standardised process established to determine and enable ongoing workforce monitoring</b> WANADA, WAAMH and Curtin University's enAble Institute, are proposing this one-off systems initiative to develop a tool that would establish a workforce baseline for both the AOD and MH sectors and support ongoing evidence-informed intelligence gathering for future initiatives.</p>	WANADA, WAAMH and enAble
<p><b>2. Promotion of the sector as a career choice</b> The development of a public campaign to increase awareness of the AOD sector as an attractive career option, building on effective examples from other jurisdictions. This would leverage existing career expos, information and communication platforms.</p>	WANADA coordination
<p><b>3. Attracting workers into the sector</b> A range of proposed options would draw VET and HE students to experience working in the sector. This initiative will focus on traineeships, student placements, sponsorships/scholarships, and internships/graduate programs.</p>	WANADA coordination
<p><b>4. Sector work readiness initiatives</b> The proposed initiative would support the MHC to increase and expand the provision of relevant training to build AOD foundational skills, knowledge and workforce readiness of people entering the AOD sector.</p>	MHC
<p><b>5. Addiction Studies and Addiction Medicine Specialist units re-introduced at universities</b> The proposed initiative, drawing on past successful models, would re-establish addiction studies and addiction medicine elective units to increase the specialist subject matter expertise of relevant graduates.</p>	WANADA coordination
<p><b>6. Review service structures and recruitment practices aimed at addressing demand pressures</b> This proposed initiative acknowledges that different approaches to recruitment and staff structures could enhance service provision efficiencies. Significant sector consultation would support effective change management in these areas.</p>	WANADA coordination
<p><b>7. A focus on retention</b> This proposed initiative would build on key factors that contribute enhanced retention of valued staff. The focus of this initiative would include enhancing worker wellbeing/reduced stress and burnout, advanced professional development, and career pathways.</p>	WANADA coordination

## Standardised process established to determine and enable ongoing workforce monitoring

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### Issue

There is currently no contemporary research-informed understanding of workforce needs in the WA alcohol and other Drug (AOD) and mental health (MH) community-managed service sectors. Anecdotally there have been demand and workforce changes as a result of issues such as the pandemic, however these are not quantified.

### Initiative

The proposed initiative, developed in partnership between WANADA, WAAMH and the Curtin University enAble Institute, is to design and implement a validated data collection tool to establish baseline data and enable ongoing monitoring of workforce needs. The data generated via the tool will provide evidence on the quantity and nature of demand on community managed AOD and MH services and the current workforces' capacity to respond to this demand. This will enable more informed and considered decision making about sector and workforce development initiatives as well as provide data to guide the design of new services that respond to changing needs.

A one-off investment in the development of the tool and initial implementation will provide a baseline of workforce data. Existing tools and processes applied in other jurisdictions will be drawn on and adapted as necessary for the WA context. The tool will enable reapplication to support evidence-informed monitoring of workforce needs, as well as allow for the evaluation of the effectiveness of workforce development initiatives.

With strong and supportive relationships with respective members and sector services, WANADA and WAAMH are ideally placed to maximise sector engagement in the tool development and participation in implementation. Curtin University's enAble Institute will provide independent oversight of the project, expertise in the development and validation of the data collection tool, processes, and analysis.

### Outcomes

- The capacity to better describe what the not-for-profit AOD and MH sectors provide. This is essential to support care co-ordination across sectors and for informing sector planning and procurement.
- The identification of "core competencies" required of staff to effectively respond to service users' needs. Core competencies would vary at different service types across the two sectors.
- A research informed understanding of the current workforce in the not-for-profit AOD and MH sectors, including data related to turnover, practice experience, qualifications, pathways into the sector, etc.
- A research informed understanding of demand pressures. The reapplication of the tool will support the sectors to monitor systems demand pressures and inform any review of the WA Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs Services Plan 2015-2025.
- A research informed understanding of the complex co-occurring/ intersecting issues and trends that service users are presenting with when they access not-for-profit AOD and MH services.

### Investment

Key costs include wages and on-costs, sector engagement and consultation related expenses, resource development, and project management and administration. WANADA, WAAMH and the enAble Institute will contribute in-kind resources.

The budget for this project is \$200,000.00 (ex GST) over 9 months. EnAble Institute has committed to an additional \$19,327.00 in kind.

### Strategic alignment:

- *MH AOD Workforce Strategic Framework: Principle 4 and 9; Priority Area 5*
- *WA Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025: System-wide reform*
- *The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Western Australia 2021-2029: Employment monitoring*
- *Sustainable Health Review: Strategy 7*
- *WA State Priorities Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs 2020-2024: Sector development*

## Promotion of the sector as a career choice

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### Issue

In response to workforce shortages multiple industry and service sectors are investing in sector promotion and awareness activities targeting high school, vocational and tertiary education students, and workers looking for career change. The AOD sector does not currently have a comparable public presence, limiting sector career awareness as an option.

### Proposed Initiative

This initiative will establish and coordinate a public campaign to increase awareness of the AOD sector as an attractive career option for high school, vocational and tertiary education students, and workers looking for career change. The campaign will leverage the strengths and diversity of the WA AOD sector and promote the significant career opportunities available across organisations, service types and models, locations, and professions.

The campaign will build on comparable models of AOD (and related) sector promotion in other jurisdictions, which have resulted in increased awareness and workforce attraction.

As an 'umbrella initiative', this project will support sector organisations to benefit from access to, and capacity to contextualise: resources; strategy/guidance; promotion activities and events.

This initiative will:

- Establish a sector 'brand' and associated strategy for promotional communications purposes
- Develop and disseminate promotional resources, including worker case studies and career guides
- Tailor resources and approaches to address the needs of key cohorts, in particular Aboriginal peoples, and regional communities
- Develop, coordinate, and disseminate social/online/conventional media material
- Identify and contribute to key career events (e.g. open days, expos), programs, sources (e.g. online career planners)
- Coordinate and support sector engagement in promotional activities and events
- Assist in career guidance and role matching activities

A coordinated approach to sector promotion as a career option will leverage the strengths of the sector, provide necessary cost rationalisation and economies of scale, and establish a strong marketing position in a competitive marketplace.

### Outcomes

- Increased awareness of the sector as a career option amongst key population and student cohorts
- Increased number of people seeking to enter the AOD workforce
- A sustainable sector brand for workforce promotion exercises

### Investment

Expenses include: engagement of a communications and marketing specialist to develop and coordinate a sector promotion campaign; sector coordination and consultation; resource development; career/promotion event facilitation; and project management. Estimate: \$90,000 (GST Excl).

### Strategic alignment:

- *MH AOD Workforce Strategic Framework: Principle 9*
- *WA Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025: System-wide reform*
- *Sustainable Health Review: Strategy 7*
- *WA State Priorities Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs 2020-2024: Sector development*

## Attracting workers into the sector

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### Issue

There are anecdotal reports from the AOD sector that it is increasingly difficult to recruit workers with the qualifications necessary for service delivery. Currently there are limited opportunities or incentives for vocational and tertiary education students to directly enter the sector workforce.

### Proposed Initiative

The proposed initiative would develop a range of AOD sector entry programs. This initiative would be developed through sector co-design, drawing on strategies that may be applied by different organisations, and build on WANADA's successful student placement model. The proposed initiative includes consideration of a range of entry incentives for vocational and tertiary education students such as:

- **Vocational education AOD sector traineeships** – Coordinated with education institutions, the Dept. of Training and Workforce Development and the AOD sector, traineeships would be offered to select students to complete accredited qualifications while simultaneously gaining experience working within an AOD service. Organisations would be supported through existing funding opportunities available through the Dept.
- **Vocational and tertiary education student placements** – Expanding on WANADA's allied health student placement model, students in relevant vocational and tertiary education requiring a work placement as a part of their course would be offered centralised support (e.g. networking, supervision and coordinated work readiness training) to reduce the burden of placement management and administration on AOD sector organisations.
- **Vocational and tertiary education student sponsorships/scholarships** – A select number of sponsorships/scholarships would be offered to students in the final year of a sector-relevant course. Each student may have opportunities for work placements in this final year, relevant readiness training, and guaranteed entry employment. As such each student will be required to commit to working for a set amount of time with the AOD organisation following graduation.
- **Vocational and tertiary education internships/graduate positions** – Accessed via a competitive process, a select number of graduates would be offered placements within AOD organisations. The organisations would be incentivised to take graduates into their workplace with funding that covers a percentage of entry level wages. The graduates would gain valuable workplace experience in AOD organisations and have access to coordinated workplace readiness and associated training.

Sector organisations would have confidence in the competencies gained by students accessing these structured programs. The initiative would include relevant Aboriginal specific vocational and tertiary education institutions/courses. Each of the programs would include regional participation considerations.

### Outcome

- Increased student entry level engagement in the AOD workforce
- Increased entry level AOD sector work readiness

### Investment

Expenses include: funding pool to support traineeship, sponsorship/scholarship and internship/graduate payments; program coordination; travel expenses to ensure regional participation; and program management and administration. Costing excludes work readiness training (assuming provided by MHC). Estimate: \$450,000 (GST Excl).

### Strategic alignment:

- *MH AOD Workforce Strategic Framework: Principle 8, 9; Priority Area 1, 2, 4*
- *WA Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025: System-wide reform*
- *The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Western Australia 2021-2029: Culture at the heart*
- *Sustainable Health Review: Strategy 7*
- *WA State Priorities Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs 2020-2024: Sector development*



## Sector work readiness initiatives

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### **Issue**

The MHC's Volunteer AOD Counsellor Program is an important and valued mechanism to support work readiness and employment into the AOD sector. The program is in high demand; while the program was recently expanded, it continues to attract many more people than the course positions allow. Demand for relevant workplace training will increase into the future as a result of attraction and recruitment initiatives.

### **Proposed Initiative**

The proposed initiative would support the MHC to increase and expand the provision of relevant training to build AOD foundational skills, knowledge and workforce readiness of people entering the AOD sector. Relevant courses currently available include:

- Induction training for new AOD workers (4 days)
- AOD skills for counsellors (2 days for new staff)
- Foundation skills for working with clients with co-occurring AOD and mental health issues.
- Trauma informed care and practice
- Relapse prevention

The MHC Workforce area could also contribute to supports such as communities of practice, supervision, and training implementation reviews on site at AOD services.

Coordination with the WANADA and the sector would support enhanced engagement, course relevance, time-management, and training application while reducing the burden on AOD services taking on entry-level employees.

### **Outcome**

- Improved skills, knowledge, and workforce readiness of entry-level employees
- Review of training courses to improve sector relevance
- Reduced burden on AOD services employing entry-level staff
- Access to relevant courses incentivising AOD sector career opportunities

### **Investment**

Expenses to be advised by the MHC Workforce area, with an estimate of two additional trainers, resource development and travel to support regional engagement.

### **Strategic alignment:**

- *MH AOD Workforce Strategic Framework: Principle 9; Priority Area 1, 2*
- *WA Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025: System-wide reform*
- *Sustainable Health Review: Strategy 7*
- *WA State Priorities Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs 2020-2024: Sector development*

## Addiction Studies and Addiction Medicine Specialist units re-introduced at universities

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### Issue

The opportunities for university students to undertake addiction studies in WA has reduced significantly over the past 15 years. This has impacted on the AOD subject matter expertise of graduates entering the AOD and related sectors. In addition, addiction medicine units are currently no longer on offer. The Dept. of Health in 2015 assessed the projected shortfall in addiction medicine specialists as reaching crisis point by 2021. Trainee throughput was assessed as insufficient to keep pace with attrition, let alone growth in demand.

### Proposed Initiative

The proposed initiative, drawing on past successful models, would establish the following units in WA universities:

- Elective units in Addiction Studies (accessible to relevant multidisciplinary students in degrees such as psychology, social work; nursing; and Aboriginal health science) offered at two WA universities.
- Elective units in Addiction Medicine (accessible to students within one WA School of Medicine).

This initiative would include the development of addictions studies and addictions medicine curricula. The development of this curricula would be developed in partnership with WANADA (i.e. the sector) and specialists to ensure the content reflects appropriate evidence and is sector relevant.

Following development of the curricula a tender process would be implemented, where universities would apply to establish and deliver the units through a jointly funded lecturer appointment. Funding for delivery would comprise 50% grant and 50% university in-kind contribution. This funding split would support sustainability and promote innovation by the successful university(s).

### Outcome

- Increased specialised subject matter expertise of relevant graduates
- Increased addiction medicine specialists, with sector connections and capacity to contribute to overall sector development

### Investment

Expenses include: curricula development; sector consultation; tender and grant administration; funding pool for university grants; and program management and administration. Estimate: \$650,000.00 (GST Excl).

### Strategic alignment:

- *MH AOD Workforce Strategic Framework: Principle 8, 9; Priority Area 1, 2, 4*
- *WA Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025: System-wide reform*
- *Sustainable Health Review: Strategy 7*
- *WA State Priorities Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs 2020-2024: Sector development*
- *WA Medical Workforce 2015 - 2025*

## Review service structures and recruitment practices aimed at addressing demand pressures

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### Issue

Anecdotal feedback from the sector indicates qualification requirements for treatment delivery roles presents a significant barrier to recruitment. Through the Aboriginal Leadership Project recruitment processes need review to ensure cultural inclusion and safety.

The value-add of, and expansion of, support roles (including Aboriginal/CaLD community engagement and dedicated peer roles) could be further explored to complement and maximise the efficiency of counselling staff.

### Proposed Initiative

The proposed initiative would support information sharing and workshops on the use of support roles within the AOD sector, and enhanced awareness of culturally safe, better-practice recruitment strategies. Services would be supported to consider:

- the value of different engagement approaches and support roles
- risk mitigation strategies (specifically for peer workers Aboriginal staff working within their communities and at mainstream organisations) to enhance worker safety
- collated feedback from Aboriginal staff on their views for improved recruitment processes. This may include the identification of core competencies that demonstrate capacity to build alliances with individuals, families and local communities that have complex concerns, and capacity to work within a multidisciplinary team
- organisation processes for the provision of training, supervision, and mentorship, for people without current qualification requirements, to develop required key competencies once employed

### Outcome

- Enhanced, culturally safe AOD sector workforce recruitment processes
- Increased opportunities for workforce entry and competency development

### Investment

Expenses include: consultation and workshop facilitation; resource development; professional development resources; and project management. Estimate: \$80,000 (GST Excl).

### Strategic alignment:

- *MH AOD Workforce Strategic Framework*: Principle 3, 4, 8, 9; Priority Area 1, 2, 3
- *WA Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025*: System-wide reform
- *The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Western Australia 2021-2029*: Culture at the heart; Building Aboriginal empowerment into how we work; Supporting Aboriginal representation and building engagement capacity
- *Sustainable Health Review*: Strategy 2, 7
- *WA State Priorities Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs 2020-2024*: Sector development

### **Issue**

Worker wellbeing, professional development and career pathways are relevant retention strategies. Research indicates that workforce attrition in AOD services is most prevalent in the first four years of employment due to stress and burn out. This is supported by trends indicated in the WANADA umbrella EAP program. Consultation undertaken in the WANADA Aboriginal Leadership Project has indicated that enhanced culturally safe approaches to worker wellbeing would specifically enhance the retention of Aboriginal staff.

### **Proposed Initiative**

The proposed initiative would support information sharing and workshops on worker wellbeing strategies and the provision of relevant resources, including those that focus on cultural safety. Consultation and data collected (as per the proposed initiative 1) would inform professional development needs that build identified needed advanced competencies as well as supporting career development.

### **Outcome**

- Increased worker wellbeing
- Increased access to relevant advanced professional development
- Increased retention and job satisfaction

### **Investment**

Expenses include: consultation and workshop facilitation; resource collation; information on accessible advanced professional development; and project management. Estimate: \$60,000 (GST Excl).

### **Strategic alignment:**

- *MH AOD Workforce Strategic Framework: Principle 9; Priority Area 3*
- *WA Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025: System-wide reform*
- *The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy Western Australia 2021-2029: Culture at the heart; Building Aboriginal empowerment into how we work; Supporting Aboriginal representation and building engagement capacity*
- *Sustainable Health Review: Strategy 7*
- *WA State Priorities Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs 2020-2024: Sector development*