

# Workforce information:

## Nursing, dental and allied health professionals in rural and remote Western Australia



### Aspects of the nursing, dental and allied health workforce in the primary health care sector of rural and remote Western Australia 2013

#### Building a profile of rural health professionals

In January 2012, Rural Health West commenced recruiting nursing, dental and allied health professionals for primary health care organisations in rural and remote Western Australia.

The need was identified for a new database to support needs analyses and future health workforce planning in the rural and remote primary health care sector. Individual provider and organisation surveys were developed for this purpose and the first surveys were conducted in 2012.

#### Data collection strategies 2013

The surveys were advertised in Rural Health West e-bulletins in May, June and July 2013 and promoted responding online via Survey Monkey.

Letters were sent to 590 rural primary health care individuals and organisations as well as to 172 rural general practices

inviting nursing, dental and allied health professionals to complete the individual provider survey. Hard copy surveys were supplied with information about completing the survey online.

#### Profile of the workforce who responded

648 health professionals responded to the 2013 individual provider survey. This was an increase of more than 110% compared to 307 survey responses in 2012. Of the 648 survey returns, 296 were completed online (45.6% of total responses).

Registered nurses (245) were the largest professional group, comprising 37.81% of all respondents in 2013. In 2012, 137 (44.6%) registered nurses responded and also made up the largest professional group identified from the 2012 survey.

Other significant professional groups who responded to the 2013 survey were physiotherapists – 86 (13.27%), enrolled nurses – 49 (7.56%) and midwives – 42 (6.48%).

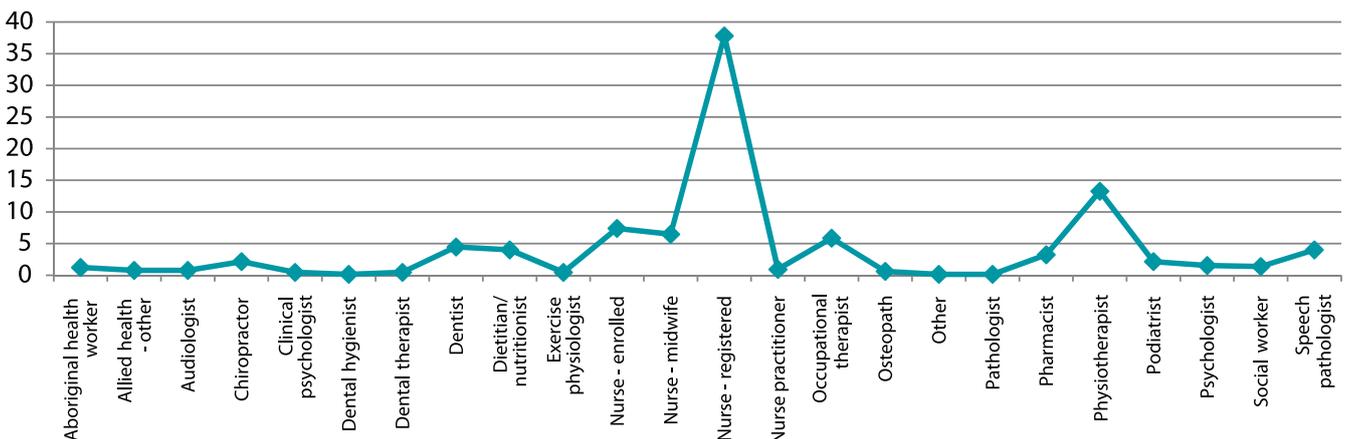


Figure 1: Percentage of survey respondents by health profession

## Location

The health provider survey data was analysed by Medicare Local boundaries, WA Country Health Service regions and Remoteness Area (RA).

### Medicare Local boundaries

2013 data showed that more than 50% of survey respondents were residents within the South West WA Medicare Local.

### WA Country Health Service regions

The highest number of respondents (38.27%) were located in the South West region which, given its population size, is to be expected. In the previous 2012 survey, respondents from the South West comprised 26.52% of all 307 survey respondents.

### Remoteness Area

The majority of respondents were from RA 2 and RA 3 areas, which was similar to the 2012 data.

RA 1	RA 2	RA 3	RA 4	RA 5
28	247	264	81	28

## Gender

2013 data showed that 85.8% of respondents were female and 14.2% were male. This is a small change from the 2012 survey data where 87.5% were female respondents.

## Age

The largest group of health professionals were aged between 45 and 54 years of age (25.15%). This compares to 35.2% in the same age group in 2012.

## Working life

52.93% (343) of respondents identified working full-time in 2013, compared to 52.1% in 2012. The data was also analysed by gender and showed that 42.48% of male survey respondents reported working full-time in 2013, compared to 73.6% in 2012. 55.14% of female survey respondents worked full-time in 2013 compared to 47.6% in 2012. The variations between 2012 and 2013 are reflective of the respondent group in each year rather than any trend as only 26% of 2013 respondents also responded to the 2012 survey. 44.86% of female respondents reported working part-time in 2013, compared to 46.46% in 2012. 32.74% of males identified themselves as working part-time in 2013 compared to 16.98% in 2012.

Further, a total of 122 (19.43%) respondents worked during the weekends and 66 (10.66%) respondents indicated doing shift work.

Finally, 102 respondents reported being self-employed while 90 respondents (79 females) reported working for more than one organisation.

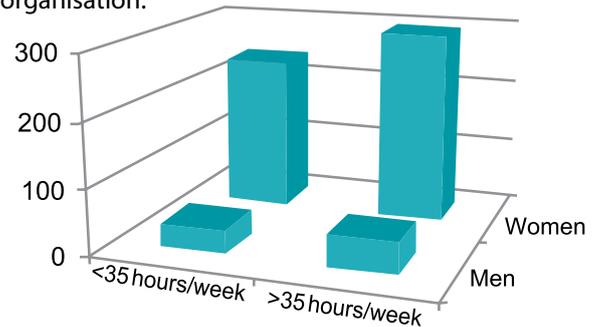


Figure 2: Working life by gender

## Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

110 health professionals (16.97%) responded to this survey question. The data showed that the most common form of CPD were lectures, with CPD being either:

- self-funded (professional associations, conferences, lectures, upskilling through university studies);
- partly funded through their employers (for example: paid study leave, paid accommodation, subsidised travel); or
- paid for and mandatory attendance was required by employers.

## Future plans

The majority of respondents (87.04%) indicated that they intend to stay where they are in the next twelve months. These responses suggest that the current survey respondents are more likely to be health professionals who are well established and permanent residents in their communities.

Significantly, only half (50.62%) of respondents identified that they intend to stay where they are in the next five years. Further, more than 10% indicated they plan to retire in the next five years.

## Generalisability

It is recognised that these figures under-report the nursing, dental and allied health workforce in the primary health care sector of rural and remote Western Australia and can only be considered as a minimum representation of workforce size as the provision of information was voluntary and is thus incomplete as not all nursing, dental and allied health professionals chose to respond.