

Workforce information: Primary health care organisations



Nursing, dental and allied health workforce in primary health care organisations in rural and remote Western Australia 2013

Building a profile of rural health professionals and organisations

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. The organisation and individual provider 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 primary health care organisations inviting them to complete the organisation survey. Each letter included a pre-filled hard copy survey and advice about completing the survey online. Additionally, 172 rural general practices were targeted via the general practice survey. A total of 762 primary health care organisations were surveyed.

Organisations responses

301 primary health care organisations operating in rural and remote Western Australia responded to the 2013 organisation survey, a 39.5% response rate. Respondents ranged from large aged care organisations to single private allied health providers. Survey returns identified 2,283 primary health care professionals. This compares to 1,395 professionals identified by 118 primary health care organisations in the 2012 survey.

The 2013 organisation survey recorded an additional 183 primary health care organisations and 888 primary health care professionals compared to the 2012 survey.

Significantly, the 2013 data includes nursing and allied health professionals employed by WA Country Health Service (WACHS) and working in community-based population health and aged care roles.

Organisations workforce size

The survey data shows that WACHS is the largest employer of the nursing and allied health workforce in the primary health care sector of rural and remote Western Australia (791) comprising 34.65% of the recorded workforce.

Other significant employers include the aged care sector (437 or 19.14%), private general practice (259 or 11.34%), private allied health providers (160 or 7.01%), Silver Chain (126 or 5.52%) and Aboriginal Medical Services (124 or 5.43%).

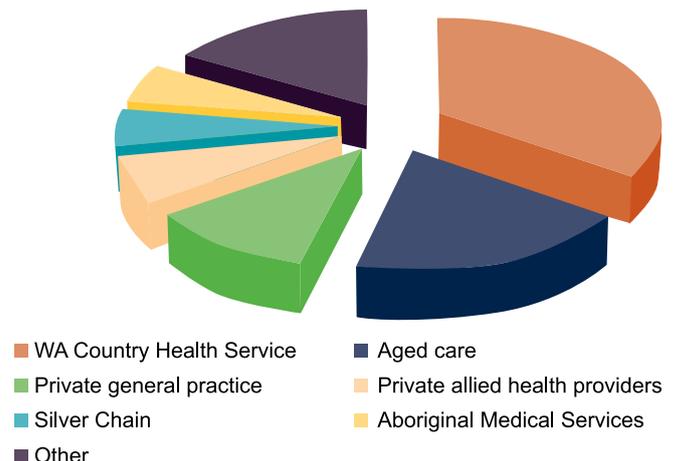


Figure 1: Employment by organisation type

Health professional groups

Similar to the 2012 survey, the largest health professional group identified was registered nurses (920) who made up 40.3% of the identified primary health care workforce. The 2013 organisation survey recorded an additional 271 registered nurses compared to 649 identified in the 2012 survey. The major employers of registered nurses were WACHS, the aged care sector, private general practice and Silver Chain.

Other significant workforce groupings were enrolled nurses (259 or 11.3%), physiotherapists (209 or 9.15%), occupational therapists (138 or 6.05%), Aboriginal health workers (121 or 5.3%) and speech pathologists (103 or 4.5%).

The major employers of physiotherapists were WACHS, private allied health businesses and aged care. 66% of all recorded enrolled nurses were employed by aged care organisations and a further 17.4% in private general practice.

WACHS was the largest recorded employer of speech pathologists (79%), occupational therapists (71%) and Aboriginal health workers (57.8%). Other significant employers of Aboriginal health workers were the Aboriginal Medical Services (26.4%) and Division Networks (13.2%).

A table summarising the 2013 organisation survey data by rural organisation type and health profession is available at www.ruralhealthwest.com.au/workforcedata

Location

The organisation survey data was analysed by Medicare Local boundaries, WACHS regions and Remoteness Area (RA). The majority of respondents resided in RA 2 and RA 3 which was similar to the 2012 survey data.

Medicare Local boundaries

Nursing, dental and allied health professionals working in RA 2 to RA 5 in Western Australia encompass three rural Medicare Locals and four metropolitan Medicare Locals.

Of note, Perth South Coastal Medicare Local includes the Mandurah region; Fremantle Medicare Local includes the Royal Flying Doctor Service staff based at Jandakot; Bentley-Armadale Medicare Local includes aged care services in Byford; and Perth North Metro Medicare Local includes Silver Chain staff who are based at Head Office and service rural and remote Western Australia.

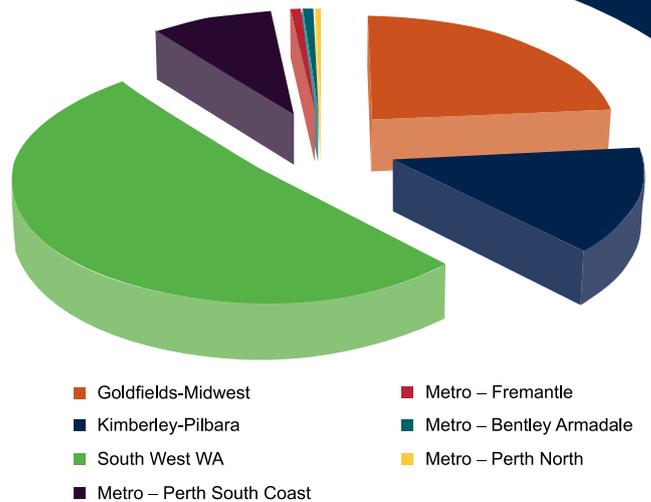


Figure 2: Employment by Medicare Local boundaries

WA Country Health Service regions

The 2013 organisation survey identified the largest workforce in the South West region (37.45%) which, given its population size, is to be expected. This compares to 26.52% identified in 2012.



Figure 3: Employment by WACHS region

Generalisability

It is recognised that these figures under-report the nursing, dental and allied health workforce in 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 organisations chose to respond.