

Speech–Language Therapy Services in Education

LANGUAGE FOR LEARNING LANGUAGE FOR LIFE



Date: Thursday 15th December 2011

To whom it may concern,

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Re: Senate Inquiry - The factors affecting the supply of health services and medical professionals in rural areas

Please find attached a submission to this inquiry from the Speech Language Therapy Strategic Leadership Network within Education Queensland.

The following response has been collated by the Attraction, Retention and Recruitment group within the Speech Language Therapy Strategic Leadership Network and is in response to the terms of reference supplied by the Senate Community Affairs Committee.

Response to Terms of Reference:

There are a number of issues facing health workers that impact on productivity and their capacity to deliver services in ways that best meet community need. These include:

- Geography - distances travelled to provide face-to-face outreach services
- Accessibility – availability and quality of information and computer technology in some rural and remote areas is still highly variable. When access, resourcing and support are available, telehealth, and web-conferencing outside of health services, is a viable and useful option for direct and indirect service delivery to consumers as well as up-skilling allied health professionals in rural and remote locations.
- Mismatch between consumer and stakeholder expectation of what services SHOULD be provided versus what services CAN be delivered and the evidence-based approaches are available to address the identified needs despite barriers such as geography.

- Siloing of available government and government funded service providers that prevents seamless and integrated service provision for consumers.
- High staff turnover and frequent vacancies impacts on productivity. Need to have strategies and incentives to encourage staff to stay a minimum of 2 to 3 years in rural and remote locations.

There are issues that affect the education and training and support to the workforce in rural and remote settings. These include:

- Ongoing costs of induction and early career development of allied health professionals due to high turnover of staff
- Consistent access to quality technology

Issues facing health workers in rural and remote settings in relation to continuing professional development, access to mentoring and support and clinical supervision, include:

- Collegial support and networking provided by attendance at face to face events is not valued
- Significantly higher costs (financial and time resources) for staff in these locations to attend PD but often no additional resources are allocated
- Technology skills to access and provide virtual professional development

Major challenges facing health leaders and health service managers in rural and remote settings include:

- Young and inexperienced staff across the allied health professions and within management
- Transient nature of allied health professionals
- Accessibility – availability and quality of information and computer technology in some rural and remote areas is still highly variable.

- Access to appropriate and timely professional specialist support, both medical and allied health support and consistency to all rural and remote areas.
- Limited recognition of the specialist skills set that health leaders and health service managers develop in rural and remote settings.

Major issues that need to be taken into consideration in planning the health workforce for rural and remote settings include:

- Siloing of available government and government funded service providers that prevent seamless and integrated service provision for consumers. This results in inefficient use of resources in those areas e.g., cost of multiple teams across multiple agencies travelling to remote locations.

Other factors that impact on allied health services in rural and remote areas include:

- Introduction of national registration excluding select allied health professions and possible future impact on planning and support for these professions.
- Cross-agency service provision is affected by different awards applying in different agencies e.g., Queensland Health and Education Queensland

For further information please contact,

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(on behalf of the Speech Language Therapy Strategic Leadership Network Attraction, Retention and Recruitment group)

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