The Health Training Package and new Aboriginal health worker and Torres Strait Islander health worker national qualifications

Robin Flynn, Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council Ltd

The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (ISC) is the national peak organisation for vocational skills development in the community services and health industries. One of the major roles of the ISC is development of the national industry qualifications in the HLT02 Health Training Package and CHC02 Community Services Training Package.

The ISC has recently completed a major review of the HLT02 Health Training Package. The Package includes 85 qualifications is expected to be ready for delivery by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in early 2007.

For the first time the Health Training Package will include eight qualifications, at several levels, covering the role of Aboriginal health worker and Torres Strait Islander health worker (health worker). Development of these qualifications commenced in 2002 following establishment of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework by the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council (AHMAC). The Framework identified the need for a revised health worker recognised skills framework established within the vocational education and training (VET) system.

In developing the qualifications the ISC has worked closely with the industry including employers from both the community controlled and government sectors and unions. Industry groups have recently signed off on all qualifications, recommending their endorsement by government (expected by 2007 as indicated above).

The eight health worker qualifications include career pathways from Certificate II to Advanced Diploma level. The qualification pathways feature Certificate II and III level qualifications and then two streams of qualifications from Certificate IV to Advanced Diploma. The two streams are: Practice and Community Care.

The Practice stream reflects more clinically oriented work roles that include functions such as undertaking basic health care assessments and implementing basic health care. The Practice stream qualifications for example will form the basis of training for the licensed occupation of Aboriginal health worker in the Northern Territory.

The Community Care stream reflects more community oriented work roles and includes working with clients with mental health, alcohol and other drugs and family violence issues as well as health promotion, advocacy, liaison and community support.

The new Aboriginal health worker and Torres Strait Islander health worker qualifications will be endorsed in early 2007 at the same time as all other qualifications in the Health Training Package. Some of the other qualifications include ambulance, allied health assisting, health technicians, dental assisting, enrolled nursing, and medical practice assisting and population health. The availability of the new Health Training Package therefore provides improved career pathways for Aboriginal health workers and Torres Strait Islander health workers both within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health work and the broader health industry.
Presenter

Robin Flynn first joined the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (ISC) over ten years ago and has since worked on numerous national, tri-partite competency development and vocational education and training (VET) research projects in the health and community services industry. His recent experience includes significant health employer-side experience with three years working in employee relations and education and training policy for the NSW Department of Health. Working again with the ISC, Robin’s overall expertise combines strong stakeholder engagement skills and application of VET and workforce systems as national levers for reform in health and community services.