



Position Statement

May 2024

Health Workforce Data

Background

Data on the demography, distribution, skill mix and future development needs of the health workforce can mean the difference between enabling or impeding health systems performance.ⁱ Data and evidence are critical enablers to enhance advocacy, planning, policy-making, governance and accountability.ⁱⁱ

While governmentsⁱⁱⁱ, employers, unions^{iv}, peak bodies^v and education providers all recognise the importance of data-driven decision making, available datasets often struggle to provide consistent sector-wide information that can sufficiently inform workforce policy and workforce model development.

Previous efforts to measure supply and demand have, in many cases, been 'point in time' and failed to adapt to external influences, such as global financial crisis and pandemics. This has led to questions regarding the long-term accuracy of supply and demand analysis. As such, there has been an inability to accurately forecast future health care worker needs.

Currently, available datasets^{vii viii ix} provide valuable insights for some workers, but lack granularity and fail to sufficiently inform supply and demand for the workforce. Importantly, work to consider and improve the availability and consistency of data is underway at both state and federal levels^{x xi xii xiii xiv}.

In terms of measuring workforce supply and demand, capability across the sector varies. Many health services have a complex web of systems (including human resource management systems and ad hoc databases) to support operational functions such as payroll, attendance, recruitment, credentialing, training and performance.

Extracting data across systems to get an accurate understanding of the workforce is a challenge for many. While some health sector employers have invested in systems and processes to untangle this complex web, many face an uphill battle when it comes to data driven operational decision making and strategic workforce planning. This includes the ready identification of current workforce vacancies.

In short, data limitations often prevent health sector employers from effectively managing their most valuable asset – their human capital.



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VHIA Position

- Secure, high quality, timely and accessible workforce data will enable health care decision makers meet the challenge of emerging skill shortages.
- VHIA recognises the significant challenges (including fiscal constraints) associated with creating workforce datasets that capture whole of workforce supply and demand.
- VHIA promotes collaboration and innovation sharing between members regarding workforce data collection, analysis, and management systems.
- VHIA seeks to work with government and regulators to establish workforce data collection systems and processes that provide timely, accurate and granular data regarding the state of the health care workforce. This includes data that:
 - can be accessed, analysed and published within reasonable time frames
 - is extracted through standardised data collection templates
 - requires minimal manual input from employers
 - is employer, profession and area of practice specific and,
 - includes current vacancy levels.
- VHIA welcomes further collaboration with the Department of Health regarding 'Focus area five' of the Health Workforce Strategy, specifically on the commitment to improve public sector workforce data through an uplift in data capture, sharing, integration and analytics to enable data-led workforce planning and policy.
- Future data collections and systems must be agile and have the capability to pivot in response to external influences, rather than being based on historical circumstances.
- VHIA aims to identify gaps between education pipelines and the practical needs of the health care industry, and drive reform and alignment between education, qualifications and skills needs of health workforce.
- VHIA seeks to work with education providers, government and regulators to establish data collection systems and processes that provide timely, accurate and granular data regarding student enrolments, course progress, graduation and post-graduation outcomes.
- The Medical Deans, Australia and New Zealand 'Data Dashboard' and 'Medical Schools Outcomes Database' is a useful example for education providers, government and regulators to consider. It is however recognised that, for some student cohorts, capturing this data may be challenging (i.e. where there are high numbers of education providers across the public, not-for-profit and private sectors) and it will take longer to establish systems and processes than for student cohorts that are educated by a small number of providers.

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- ⁱ World Health Organisation [Strengthening the collection, analysis and use of health workforce data and information: a handbook \(who.int\)](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ⁱⁱ World Health Organisation [Global strategy on human resources for health: Workforce 2030 \(who.int\)](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Health [Victorian health workforce strategy | health.vic.gov.au](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{iv} Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation [Submission--Public-consultation-on-the-draft-Data-strategy---Australian-Nursing-and-Midwifery-Federation \(1\).PDF](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^v Allied Health Professions Australia [Workforce data and development - Allied Health Professions Australia \(ahpa.com.au\)](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{vi} Victorian Skills Authority [Employment Forecast Dashboard | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{vii} Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care [National Health Workforce Dataset](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{viii} Victorian Public Sector Commission [Health sector data collection - VPSC](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{ix} Department of Health [aims-manual-2023-24.docx \(live.com\)](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^x Department of Health [Victorian health workforce strategy | health.vic.gov.au](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{xi} Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care [National Nursing Workforce Strategy | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{xii} Department of Health [Health Workforce Strategy | health.vic.gov.au](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{xiii} Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care [National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021–2031 | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{xiv} Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care [Heads UPP \(health.gov.au\)](#) accessed 23 February 2024
- ^{xv} Medical Deans, Australian and New Zealand [Home - Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand](#) accessed 23 February 2024