



**Overview of the Victorian Allied Health
Assistant Workforce Recommendations
for the Vocational Education Training
sector**

The Victorian Allied Health Assistant Workforce Recommendations

“The Allied health professional will meet you first, work out your plan and your goals with you and then the Allied health assistant will help you reach those goals by seeing you regularly”

Consumer

Context

All Victorian consumers have the right to access safe and effective therapy and supports. Allied health assistants have a role in this, under the delegation and supervision of Allied health professionals. The optimal utilisation of Allied health assistants enables greater access to services for a larger number of consumers, whilst allowing Allied health professionals to complete more complex work.



Figure 1: The Department’s Five Year Allied health assistant workforce objectives

Purpose

The Department of Health, in collaboration with Monash Health, have developed the Victorian Allied Health Assistant Workforce Recommendations. These aim to meet the

Department’s Allied health assistant workforce objectives (figure 1). The recommendations support the optimal utilisation of Allied health assistants across the health, aged care and disability sector. They have been developed through broad consultation and are underpinned by the three core principles of respect, learn and grow. These eighteen recommendations and implementation resources cover the areas of pre-employment training, workforce planning and governance, consumer centered therapy and supports, recruitment, orientation and induction, workplace training, professional development and career pathways.

The Victorian Vocational Education Training (VET) sector

The recognised qualification for Allied health assistants in Australia is the Certificate III Allied Health Assistance and the Certificate IV Allied Health Assistance. These certificate qualifications are part of the Health Training package. They are delivered through the VET sector, both public and private providers, throughout Australia. In Victoria, as at 2019, there were twenty providers registered to deliver the Certificate III and/or the Certificate IV Allied Health Assistance.

Despite a nationally accredited training package, no one course appears the same. Student cohorts who undertake Allied Health Assistance training vary in age, life stage and background and undertake certificate training and careers for a variety of reasons (figure 2). Allied health assistance certificate courses and their graduates are highly variable.



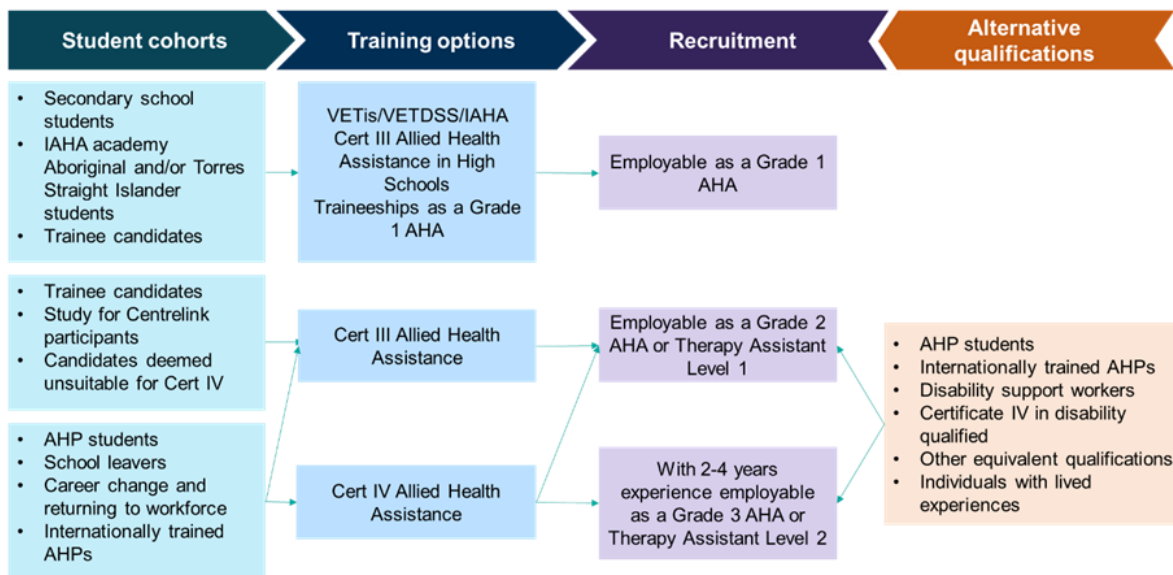


Figure 2: Summary of current pathways to working as an Allied health assistant. Key: Vocational Education and Training in schools (VETis), Vocational Education and Training Delivered to Secondary Students (VETDSS), Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), Certificate IV (Cert IV), Certificate III (Cert III), Allied health assistant (AHA), Allied health professional (AHP)

This is compounded by limited workplace exposure, often restricted to only one environment, and short clinical placement hours (<120 hours) during training. Inconsistent training creates issues for industry as workplace competency-based training needs are not predictable, difficult to plan, highly individualised and resource intensive. The variability in training has resulted in Allied health professionals reporting difficulties in understanding what tasks they can delegate to an Allied health assistant. This has led to increased preference by industry to employ alternately qualified Allied health assistants.

Another challenge in providing a consistent qualification is a lack of appropriate teachers to deliver the Allied health assistance training, particularly in regional areas. The cost of undertaking the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) has been a disincentive for Allied health professionals or Allied health assistants to become TAFE teachers. As the Certificate IV in TAE is now on the 'Free TAFE' list this should help to remove this barrier.

The 'Free TAFE' initiative¹ has seen reduced student completion/workforce entry rates, in part because the students were not suited for the role or had insufficient knowledge about the role of an Allied health assistant when they commenced the course. However, Registered Training

Organisations (RTOs) signed up to a 'Free TAFE Minimum Service Standard' which includes undertaking a pre-training assessment. This strategy, if working effectively, should improve the course completion rate of students who commence the Certificate IV in Allied health assistance.

The recommendations put forward in the Future Skills for Victoria Report² demonstrates significant alignment with the workforce recommendations in highlighting the need to support the VET sector in ensuring a strong post-secondary education and training system.

Key messages for the VET sector

- peak and funding body endorsement of these qualifications is required for improved graduate employment outcomes.
- regular and broad consultation with industry to ensure the course content, delivery, placement opportunities and graduates match industry need is required to improve credibility of the Allied Health Assistance certificate training.
- collaboration with other course providers will ensure consistency of course content and delivery.
- partnerships with industry to create training pipelines for Allied health staff to teach will assist in sustained quality course delivery.



Recommendations to optimise the utilisation of Allied health assistants across Victoria

Seven key areas of utilisation are covered in the recommendations. While all of the eighteen recommendations are relevant to Allied health assistants, professionals and employers working in the VET sector, the most relevant recommendations are highlighted.



Pre-employment training

Recommendation 1

The Allied Health Assistance training package is regularly reviewed in consultation with the health, disability and aged care sectors at national and local Registered Training Organisation (RTO) level.

Recommendation 2

Incorporate a culturally safe pre-training aptitude interview as an entry requirement for the Allied Health Assistance course, including an assessment of communication, literacy and numeracy capabilities to ensure individual suitability for an allied health career.

Recommendation 3

The VET sector works collaboratively to ensure the certificate Allied Health Assistance course curriculum is consistent across providers.

Recommendation 4

The VET sector increases clinical exposure and placement experience in pre-employment training.

Recommendation 5

The VET sector provides clear messaging to prospective and enrolled allied health assistant students as to the role of an Allied health assistant.



Workforce planning and governance

Recommendation 6

Workplaces undertake robust workforce planning and redesign processes in relation to the Allied health assistant workforce.

Recommendation 7

Workplace governance structures define role delineation and delegation practices to ensure safe, effective evidence based therapy and supports.

Recommendation 8

The existing supervision and delegation frameworks support the training and practice of supervision and delegation between Allied health professionals and Allied health assistants.

Recommendation 9

Workplaces establish and maintain a culture of mutual respect, equal value and collaboration to promote continual learning and growth of Allied health assistants and the value of the role.



Consumer-centred therapy and supports

Recommendation 10

Consumers are provided with information about the roles of the treating team, and the benefits of having an Allied health assistant involved with their therapy and supports.





Recruitment

Recommendation 11

To improve consistency of graduate knowledge and ensure clear scope of practice parameters, the Certificate III and Certificate IV Allied Health Assistance training is the entry level qualification for all Allied health assistants in all sectors and where equivalence is required, it is transparent and defined clearly.

Recommendation 12

When recruiting Allied health assistants, the interview incorporates behavioural scenarios to evaluate candidate's aptitude and capability to provide safe and effective therapy and supports and appropriate attitudes to learning.



Orientation and induction

Recommendation 13

Workplace orientation for all new Allied health professionals and assistants provides clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Allied health assistant and other professional staff to support a mutually respectful culture.



Workplace competency-based training

Recommendation 14

All competency-based training development aligns with the *Allied health: credentialing, competency and capability framework*.

Recommendation 15

Workplace competency-based training is complemented by working side-by-side with Allied health professionals to develop trusted working relationships and shared knowledge of roles.

Recommendation 16

Workplace competency based training and assessment is undertaken by supervisors who meet relevant requirements.

Recommendation 17

Competency attainment is recorded for transferability between roles and settings.



Professional Development

Recommendation 18

Allied health assistant learning needs are formally identified and addressed to instil life-long learning, maintain performance standards and support career development.

For more information

For full details of key consultation findings, activities a workplace might consider, VET sector case examples, indicators of progress and resources, please refer to the full version of the Victorian Allied Health Assistants Workforce Recommendations available at: <<https://vicahaworkforceproject.monashhealth.org>>.

Additionally further Allied health assistant workforce projects supported by the Department of Health are available at: <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/allied-health-workforce/allied-health-assistant-workforce>>.

References:

1. State Government of Victoria. *Free TAFE for lots of jobs*. 2022; Available from: www.vic.gov.au/free-tafe.
2. Macklin, J., *Future Skills for Victoria, Driving collaboration and innovation in post-secondary education and training*. 2020, Victorian Government: Melbourne.

