



Aged & Community Services
Association of NSW & ACT

Building Infrastructure and Networks Regional Development Workers in Community Care

Aged & Community Services Association of NSW & ACT

May 2005

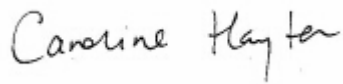
Contents

Topic	Page Number
Acknowledgements	3
List of Abbreviations	4
Executive Summary	5
Methodology	6
Research Questions	8
Literature Review	9
Results	17
Conclusion	25
Bibliography	27
Appendices	28
Appendix One	28
Service Provider Survey	28
Regional Development Officer Survey	32
Appendix Two – List of Interviewees	37
Appendix Three - List of Regional Development Workers working in Community Care in NSW	38

Acknowledgements

This research project was undertaken by Evan Lowndes and Kyla Kohler, students from Macquarie University as part of their internship at the Aged & Community Services Association of NSW & ACT (ACS) from August to December 2004. The research project and students were managed by Caroline Hayter, Policy Officer at ACS.

ACS like to thank the Regional Development Workers and service providers who kindly gave up their time to complete the survey and assist with this research project.



Caroline Hayter
Policy Officer
Aged & Community Services Association of NSW & ACT
May 2005

List of Abbreviations

ADD	Ageing and Disability Department (NSW)
ACS	Aged and Community Services Association of NSW & ACT
CACP	Community Aged Care Packages
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DADHC	Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (NSW)
EACH	Extended Aged Care in the Home package
HACC	Home and Community Care program
HDOs	HACC Development Officers
MDS	Minimum Data Set
NCOSS	Council of Social Service NSW
RDW	Regional Development Worker
SSDOs	Service Support and Development Officer, NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Executive Summary

In NSW, Regional Development Workers have played a critical role in supporting community care services, as well as building cross-sector relationships between community care, health and disability services. Many of these workers play a critical role in supporting community care services to implement policy changes (many initiated by government) as well as developing innovation and cross sector partnerships. Regional Development Workers can include a range of workers such as HACC Development Officers, local government Aged and Disability Workers, Transport Development Workers, Dementia Advisory Workers and Food Service Development Workers.

The role of Regional Development Workers in supporting the non-government community care sector may not be well understood by both State and Australian Governments. While many positions are funded by State and Australian Governments, questions have been asked about the role of Regional Development Workers in supporting and sustaining the community care sector. This is particularly important given current debates about community care reform and the critical role that Regional Development Workers could play in supporting community care services to manage and implement changes at the service and regional level.

This research project sought to identify some of the key roles played by Regional Development Workers supporting community care services in NSW. The results identify that Regional Development Workers play a vital role in supporting service providers to initiate change, develop partnerships and implement government policy changes (including Australian and State Governments).

The results also identified that the spread and coverage of Regional Development Workers varies across NSW. The Orana Far West region of NSW (part of the western region of DADHC) is one of the largest regions in NSW but does not have a HACC Development Officer. Inequities in the distribution and spread of Regional Development Workers mean that services may have difficulty accessing support to implement government policy changes as well as initiating innovative projects. It is vital that Federal and State Governments provide funding to ensure there is equity of access to Regional Development Workers in community care across NSW.

Methodology

The research used primarily qualitative methods. Two surveys were designed, one for Regional Development Workers and one for service providers. The sample size was very small as the research had a qualitative focus.

The surveys were administered over the phone in the form of structured interviews. This approach allowed for further explorations of themes and issues raised by respondents. Due to the time constraints of the researchers as well as service coordinators, some of the surveys were sent by fax. A copy of the Service Provider survey and the Regional Development Workers survey is at Appendix One.

An extensive literature review was conducted which included research such as the report of a 1999 Review of the Role of Home and Community Care Development Officers (HDOs) in NSW. This also included examinations of research work undertaken on how Regional Development Workers can support services with change management and a review of papers relating to social capital and community development.

An advisory group consisting of peak associations including the Aged & Community Services Association of NSW & ACT (ACS), the Council of Social Services of NSW (NCOSS) and three Regional Development Workers in community care provided feedback and advice about the project.

Sample Size

Regional Development Workers

A total of nine Regional Development Workers, including three workers from rural and remote areas, one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worker and five metropolitan Regional Development Workers were interviewed for the research. This included six HACC Development Officers (26% of HACC Development Officers) and three local government workers. Regional Development Workers in different settings were interviewed to compare and contrast any difference between metropolitan workers, rural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers who would encounter differing needs and demands in their various roles.

Service Providers

A total of eleven service providers were surveyed for the project. The project limited the selection of services to HACC services and chose them randomly from contact and service lists obtained from a variety of sources, including the HACC Development Officers, the Commonwealth Carelink Centre and council information brochures.

Six service providers, three from rural and remote areas and three from the Sydney metropolitan area who had access to support from Regional Development Workers were included. Four of these surveys were conducted by telephone, while two were faxed responses.

Five service providers, who currently operate in regions without Regional Development Workers, were also surveyed. Three of these services were in rural and remote areas and two in metropolitan or urban fringe areas. Three of these services were contacted and interviewed over the phone and two services responded by fax.

A list of the Regional Development Workers and the service providers interviewed is attached in Appendix Two.

The sample size of this research project was small because the research aimed to identify qualitative information about the roles of Regional Development Workers in community care. The sample of Regional Development Workers is representative of the range of workers working in the community care sector.

The small sample size of service providers also reflected the limited time frame of the student placements. Future research could be undertaken examining service providers perceptions of Regional Development Workers using a much larger sample size.

Research Questions

This project examined the following research questions:

1. What tasks do Regional Development Workers undertake in their day to day work?
2. What initiatives have been developed as a result of the work of Regional Development Workers in various regions throughout NSW?
3. What support do community care providers receive from Regional Development Workers?
4. What is the role of Regional Development Workers in supporting community care services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?
5. What is the role of Aboriginal Development Workers in supporting Aboriginal specific community care services?
6. What role do development workers undertake in supporting community care services which is different from government or departmental officers?
7. In regions that do not have Regional Development Workers, how do community care services access information and support?

Literature Review

The Role of Regional Development Workers in Community Care in NSW

There is a range of positions within the community care sector in NSW that can be classified as Regional Development Workers. The key feature of this role is to undertake community development to support community care services in meeting the needs of their local communities. They also act as the central information point, co-ordinate and share information with other community care providers across the sector. Examples of Regional Development Workers include:

- HACC Development Officers (HACC funded);
- Local Government Aged and Disability Workers (funded jointly by the Home and Community Care program as well as local government);
- Regionally based training projects (generally HACC funded);
- Transport Development Workers (funded by the NSW Government);
- Dementia Advisory Services (HACC funded);
- Food Service Development Workers (HACC funded); and
- Multicultural Access Project Workers (MAPs) (HACC funded).

Regional Development Workers have been funded by State and Local Government since the early 1980s. In 1986 with the inception of the HACC program and growth projected to be 20%, a number of HACC Development Officer positions were funded. These workers were funded to complement the work of existing Aged Service Workers funded jointly by Local Government and State Government.

Interestingly, NSW has the highest number of HACC service outlets than any other state or territory in Australia. In NSW in 2003 there were 1,487 HACC agencies as compared to Queensland which had 706 agencies. Interestingly, NSW also had the lowest government real expenditure per capita eligible population on HACC services. Regional Development Workers, particularly HDOs, play a vital role in supporting many of these agencies and facilitating cross sector partnerships.¹

The varying roles of Regional Development Workers in community care, particularly HDOs, were identified in the HACC Development Officer's Review undertaken by the Ageing & Disability Department in 1999.² The Review undertook a systematic review of the role of Regional Development Workers (in particular HACC Development Officers) in supporting the community care sector. The review identified some of the key roles of HDOs which included:

- the provision of advice and technical assistance;
- the provision of information and promotion of local events;
- providing training and education for HACC services; and
- supporting community care services (particularly HACC services) with policy development and implementing policy changes.

¹ Productivity Commission, 2004

² Ageing and Disability Department, July 1999 (now known as the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care- DADHC)

The review attempted to define and distinguish the support and development roles of the then Ageing and Disability Department's regional staff (Service Support Development Officers – now termed DADHC Project Officers) and the HDOs. The Review found that:

1. HDOs generate positive influence in the community care sector through the provision of information and advocacy;
2. HDOs are an important source of support for small to medium community care organisations;
3. HACC services expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the support and information provided by HDOs (900 HACC services were surveyed with a 43% response rate);
4. some HACC services needed a higher level of individual support than could be provided by HDOs;
5. larger organisations which access support and information through their existing infrastructure viewed the HDO role as less critical;
6. HDOs are vital in supporting community care providers to manage change; and
7. defining the roles of regionally based Ageing & Disability Department staff (Service Support and Development Officers or DADHC Project Officers) and HDOs was important. Both workers had a complementary role in providing support and information as well as assisting services to implement policy changes by government.

Areas or opportunities for improvement of the role of the HDOs as identified by the review included:

- the provision of individual service support by HDOs (in such areas as technical or management support, training and access issues);
- the balance for HDOs between working on the collective HACC system (such as advocacy, information/promotion) and providing individual service support;
- working collaboratively with SSDOs or DADHC Project Officers of the Ageing and Disability Department. SSDOs (DADHC Project Officers) tended to focus on service monitoring and contract and performance management while HDOs undertook a more educational role in the form of networking, information and coordination.

The importance of Regional Development Workers, particularly transport development workers was also identified in a position paper developed by the NSW Transport Development Network³. The report identified similar themes to the HACC

³ Battellino, H., (2004) *Transport Development Workers Network Position Paper*, Transport Development Workers NSW, Sydney.

Development Officers Review identifying the importance of Transport Development Workers in providing information and support, facilitating partnerships and developing integrated transport systems at the local government level.

Government Funding of Regional Development Workers

The funding of Regional Development Workers by the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care since 1997 represents a very small amount of the total HACC funding. Table One illustrates that the funding of Regional Development Workers has on average been between 1.2% and 1.5% of the total HACC budget. This represents a very small proportion of the total HACC funding. The findings of the HDOs Review highlighted the significant value these positions contribute to reducing fragmentation across the service sector in NSW for a small outlay of funding.

Table One – Levels of Funding of Regional Development Workers in Community Care

Year	Total Funding of HACC Development Officers and Aged and Disability Workers (\$)	Total HACC Funding (\$)	% of total HACC Funding
1998/1999	3,965,061	260,424,000	1.2%
1999/2000	4,292,799	270,276,000	1.5%
2000/2001	4,459,746	290,941,743	1.5%
2001/2002	4,772,835	317,898,000	1.2%
2002/2003	*Figures not available	*Figures not available	* Regional Development Workers funding not identified separately in HACC State Plan
2003/2004	*Regional Development Workers funding not identified separately in HACC State Plan	382,000,000	*Regional Development Workers funding not identified separately in HACC State Plan
2004/2005	*HACC State Plan not released.	420,000,000	*HACC State Plan not released.

Figures obtained from HACC State Plans produced by the Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care (or the Ageing & Disability Department – ADD)

* Funding for these workers was not separately identified in 2002/2003, 2003/2004 and 2004/2005.

As identified in Table One, the HACC program in NSW has grown significantly since 1997/1998. With this growth there have been new service outlets funded through the HACC program which could have created additional workload pressures and demands on Regional Development Workers.

Growth funding for Regional Development Workers (such as HDOs and local government workers) has been limited so the proportion of total funding allocated to these positions is likely to have fallen. The funding from 1998-2002 also included funding for HACC Reform Workers to assist regions with the implementation of HACC reforms across regions in NSW. The funding of these positions ceased at the end of 2002.

Growth funding for Regional Development Workers is an area that DADHC needs to consider and examine closely given that the HACC program has an average growth rate of 6-8% over the last 3-5 years. The funding for Regional Development Workers has remained relatively stable over this time.

The funding and coverage of Regional Development Workers (particularly HDOs) between DADHC regions varies. A list of Regional Development Workers in Community Care is at Appendix Three.

The Western Region of DADHC is one of the largest geographical regions in the state. However, it is only funded for two HDOs, one in the Central West and one covering parts of the Riverina/Murray region. Dubbo and surrounding areas currently do not have access to a HDO. The Illawarra region also does not have a HDO. It is important there is equity between regions in terms of services accessing Regional Development Workers.

Regional Development Workers – Supporting Services to implement Change Management

In addition to HDOs, the NSW Department of Ageing & Disability funded Regional Development Workers (HACC Reform Workers) to support services implement reforms in the HACC program from 1998 until 2001. HACC Reform Workers played a key role in facilitating and supporting services in the implementation of changes to the HACC program. The HACC Reforms aimed to streamline service provision, minimise duplication of assessment for clients and provide data on service usage and provision for HACC clients.

HACC Reform Workers were responsible for:

- the development of locally based protocols to support the implementation of the Client Information and Referral Record (CIARR);
- providing training and support to services to implement the Minimum Data Set; and
- co-ordinating and facilitating protocols for comprehensive assessment in NSW.

The role of HDOs and HACC Reform Workers in supporting services through implementing changes in the HACC program was clearly identified in an unpublished research report “Supporting Management to Manage Change” funded by DADHC in 2002⁴. The research clearly identified the importance of Regional Development

⁴Community Care Industry Council, June 2003.

Workers in supporting services to implement and manage change at the organisational and regional level.

In some regions of NSW, Transport Development Workers and Food Service Development Workers have been funded to support services implement changes in government policy or to develop more integrated service systems. For example, the Wollongong and Southern Highlands employed regional Transport Development Workers who have been instrumental in mapping transport services and developing integrated transport systems across the community care and health care systems. In some regions Food Service Development Workers have been funded to provide support and advice to food services on implementing changes in government policy, particularly the HACCP Food Safety Standards. A list of Regional Development Workers in Community Care is at Appendix Three.

It is interesting to note that the Australian Department of Health & Ageing does not fund Regional Development Workers to support services running Australian Government funded community care services such as Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) and Extended Aged Care in the Home (EACH) packages. This has created difficulties for some providers in getting the support needed to effectively run the services, as well as some of the interface issues between HACC services and the CACP/EACH program.

There are some regional networks for CACP providers. However, these are largely dependent upon individual services and people taking the initiative to provide secretarial support for the forums. In some regions CACP network meetings are infrequent because of the lack of administrative support. In some regions HDOs often provide support to CACP and EACH providers because of the lack of access to Regional Development Workers.

Regional Development Workers Build and Generate Social Capital

Definitions of social capital all link broader economic, social and political spheres and identify that social relationships influence how markets and states operate. They also emphasise the link between stable individual relationships and collective action and argue that social capital can be strengthened but this requires resources.

The advocates of social capital argue that public policy should evolve around seven ideas that include:

- a commitment to strategic investment by government, business and the social services sector;
- a focus on systemic change;
- a central commitment to information and transparency as the basis for holding people accountable for results;
- learning how to establish and sustain effective partnerships that draw on resources to set up new institutions that create new and more diverse sources of power and authority;
- responses to community problems that are both complex and integrated;

- basing the structures and process of public policy around people and places; and
- creating new ways to promote leading practice and breakthrough ideas so they can be taken up more quickly.⁵

Regional Development Workers generate social capital through building relationships and networks between providers and across communities. They build trust between different aspects and parts of the service system. Examples of this include building relationships between health and the community care system, between community care and mental health services and between community care and disability services. Regional Development Workers are able to identify areas of unmet need and work with services and consumers to develop more responsive service systems.

There are many examples of Regional Development Workers initiating and managing change and building social capital at a regional level. In some regions Regional Development Workers have been instrumental in developing partnerships and memoranda of understanding between community care services and mental health services, developing intake protocols between respite care services⁶. The HACC Development Officers Network of NSW is creating an Innovative Solutions Manual that showcases innovative work developed by HDOs in partnership with local service providers⁷.

Some workers have been instrumental in enabling services to work more efficiently through establishing resource sharing networks. This work has been very important in terms of building connections between services in a fragmented community care system.⁸

Supporting Diversity - A Role for Regional Development Workers?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

The needs of services supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be diverse. Often these needs are overlooked and Regional Development Workers can work with consumers and services to improve access to these services.

Regional Development Workers can work with communities to identify services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They can also work with consumers and services to build infrastructures and networks to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services.

The provision of management support and advice to meet increasing accountability requirements by government could be an important role played by Aboriginal

⁵ Stewart-Weeks 2000: 302 -303

⁶ For further information see the HACC Development Officers Network website, Innovations Page, www.haccdos.org.au

⁷ This manual will be released in the first half of 2005 by the HACC Development Officers Network of NSW

⁸ The Illawarra Forum developed a Resource Sharing Network in the Wingecarribee Shire based on worked undertaken by a Regional Development Worker.

Development Workers. This support will be important from July 2005 with the roll out of the Quality Reporting Accountability Framework (for Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs), Extended Aged Care in the Home (EACH) program and National Respite for Carers program) by the Australian Department of Health & Ageing. There are up to 40 CACP projects providing Aboriginal specific services that could need support to implement the accountability framework in NSW.

People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Backgrounds

There are growing numbers of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds in Australia. In 1996, 18% of Australians aged 65 and older were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. By 2011, this population is projected to increase to 23% of older Australians. Large proportions of people from CALD backgrounds will be residing in city areas⁹.

There are a number of HACC services and Australian Government funded community care services that specifically target the needs of people from CALD backgrounds. However, there are often concerns about how people from CALD backgrounds access appropriate community care services.

Regional Development Workers can play a critical role in supporting CALD services as well as mainstream services in improving access to community care services. In NSW, DADHC has funded Multicultural Access Project workers to support HACC services in improving access to services for people from CALD communities. There are significant discrepancies between regions in terms of the levels of funding of Multicultural Access Project workers. Some regions have full time workers and others have part time workers. A list of Multicultural Access Project workers is at Appendix Three.

Community Care Reform – A Role for Regional Development Workers?

The need for reform of the community care system in NSW and Australia has been debated over the last decade. The need to make the community care system less complex and more accessible for people who use the system is currently on the agenda of State and Australian Governments. In March 2003, the Australian Government released a discussion paper on the need to simplify and streamline the community care system.

A final position paper, *The Way Forward – A New Strategy for Community Care*¹⁰ was released in August 2004. Negotiations between State and Australian Governments are progressing with key areas of reform likely to include: assessment and intake systems; eligibility; fees policy across all community care services; consistent standards across State and Australian government community care services and consistent planning processes. The Australian Government has put out

⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, September 2004, Pg 4.

¹⁰ Australian Government, Department of Health and Ageing, 2004

to competitive tender a range of its own programs including the National Respite for Carers Program.

Regionally based development workers, such as HACC Development Officers and Local Government aged and disability workers, may be able to provide the support and assistance required by community care providers to implement some of these policy changes. It is likely there will be significant policy changes in the HACC program which will have flow on effects to other community care programs. Service providers and consumers will need some support and assistance to implement changes to intake and assessment systems.

Results

The roles of the Regional Development Workers (RDW) varied considerably depending on the individual's circumstances, experience and region. The results highlight the different role of Local Government workers and HDOs. Local Government workers work within their Local Government area whereas HDOs tend to work across multiple Local Government areas.

One service manager commented that they would like to see more cooperation between the council workers and the HDOs and another service coordinator in Sydney said:

“We value our HDO. This position was previously split between several council workers who did a good job but the designated HDO is independent of council agendas. The inner west is very fortunate to have a current HDO. The Marrickville/Canterbury area is also fortunate to have a good HDO. Both are very important.”

The Regional Development Workers interviewed showed high enthusiasm for the community care sector and in working with services. An important aspect of the work of the RDWs was creating and maintaining strong relationships with service providers to provide information and support. RDWs are considered valuable for the time and effort that they are able to give to service providers, with a manager of a service in Lithgow saying that their relationship with the HDO in the area is “really valuable... they are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, we get our fair share of contact”.

Information dissemination

The interviews conducted with RDWs and service providers showed that the collection and dissemination of information is a vital part of the work of RDWs. RDWs need to be informed of changes and issues in the sector, services provided in their region and to be aware of best practices that can be shared with other services. One officer made the point that without knowing what the barriers and strengths in the region's community care services are, they would not be able to provide the support to services.

The data collected from the survey of RDWs highlighted that a large proportion of their time is spent gathering and distributing information about government policy, local issues and demographics, management and business advice and training programs. One worker said that:

“People generally phone and ask questions about who has access to what services, about how to comply with the Minimum Data Set (MDS). I will generally go away and find the information and get back to the service providers. Services often ask about policy, interpretations and implications for their program”.

For services catering to the needs of people from CALD backgrounds, the information required often relates to translation of handbooks and brochures, interpreter services, information and training in cultural awareness. Mostly the RDWs were able to direct services to appropriate interpreter services and training. This was particularly the case in metropolitan areas where there is a higher proportion of people from CALD backgrounds.

Providing advice and information to services to improve access to services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was another important role of RDWs, particularly Aboriginal Regional Development Workers. An Aboriginal RDW in Sydney was able to assist the Epilepsy Association when they wanted to implement a pilot project to help Aboriginal people access their services. The Aboriginal RDW was able to help word surveys to be culturally appropriate, which were given to Aboriginal communities, as well as being able to negotiate with community elders. The surveys that were produced were used in Dubbo, Moree, Broome in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

RDWs provide information to services through websites and forums, with the major method of relaying information being e-mail distributions. Four of the services who were surveyed in areas with RDWs reported e-mail contact as very frequent, either as part of distribution lists or in response to specific questions and issues. One service manager in Sydney said they have an “enormous amount of contact and the HDO sends out something almost everyday”. All of the RDWs indicated they attend multiple forums and inter-agencies, where they are able to share information, organise guest speakers, participate in regional planning.

In areas without RDWs, two service managers indicated they felt network opportunities and information about training courses would significantly improve if the region had access to a RDW. Four out of five services without a RDW indicated they would like greater access to information about other services and information about policy/program guidelines.

In areas with RDWs, this number was three out of six and all five services in areas without a RDW indicated they would like assistance with service and regional planning.

Training

Eight of the RDWs regularly organise and run training programs including HACC orientation and induction courses. However, they also provided examples where they were able to provide information on training courses as well as attending training to support service providers.

One of the RDWs in a rural setting provides induction training for HACC volunteers, paid staff and board members four times a year, which includes cultural awareness training. This training provides information on the HACC program, not only to service providers, but also to people needing to access community care services. Other training initiatives included training in Occupational Health and Safety, privacy and mental health awareness. Another RDW assisted service providers to access Certificate IV for workers in their region.

Other practical assistance that was identified in the surveys was assisting services to write policy guidelines and manuals, writing brochures and help using Minimum Data Set (MDS) software.

Facilitation of Networks

The results of the survey identified examples of RDWs creating, facilitating, organising and providing resources for forums, inter-agencies and networks. These forums were identified by respondents (particularly service providers), as important ways to share information, discuss local issues, participate in decision making, and form a united voice with regard to issues affecting the community care sector. An important aspect was that the Regional Development Workers are independent influences, which stand outside the actual services and government agencies. The workers are able to provide the time to support the administration and running of community care forums. This work, according to an RDW in the Central West, is very important in rural areas as many services are isolated and do not know what other services are available.

In regions without RDWs, it is mostly up to the services themselves to arrange and facilitate network meetings and fora. Four out of the five service providers in areas with a RDW identified 'network creation/support' as an important part of the work of RDWs. In the Far West, there are Council Aged and Disability workers in some LGAs, but no HDO for the region, one service manager said that:

“At the moment, the services support each other, or a Development Officer from another area will come”

Often the RDWs have been responsible for creating networks where there have been none, or linking separate forums with the same issues. For example, in Sydney's Inner South-West, an RDW was able to identify that a disability service providing case management for younger people with disability was not linking in with HACC case management services. The RDW was able to call a meeting where the participants were able to work on a mapping exercise to connect services.

The HACC DO in the Central West has identified services that are not connected through networks, taking steps to include them. Two Local Government Aged and Disability workers, one in Sydney's Inner West, the other in Broken Hill, were able to provide examples of occasions where they were able to network services with similar client groups. According to the council worker in Broken Hill, these connections led to better dissemination of information, better support for advocacy and more willingness for services to work with each other and build a rapport among community care services.

Through local and regional forums, as well as other initiatives that bring service providers together, fragmentation and duplication of service delivery can be avoided. In the Central West of NSW, the RDW knew of an instance where there were 26 respite services without contact with each other. The RDW was able to organise a meeting in which they drew up a service map in the Central West and developed a disability respite protocol which ensured better utilisation of funding and resources.

Evaluating Regional Development Workers

There are a number of both formal and informal ways that RDWs evaluate their work. The NSW HACC Development Officers Network is currently developing an evaluation form which will assess the work being undertaken by RDWs. The aim is to develop quality measurements that will enable the work of the HACC DOs to develop outputs.

Five of the RDWs indicated they design and distribute surveys to service providers, members of the community and participants in forums, training days and workshops they run. The feedback from these allows the RDWs to gauge whether services find these events particularly relevant or useful. As well as this, most of the RDWs indicated personal and team reflection as very important. Management appraisals, advisory committee advice, setting goals and levels of achievement and measuring against these are also important ways of evaluating the work of RDWs.

Attendance by service providers at meetings, forums and training days are also indications of whether the work of the RDW is helping services in their work, with one RDW in Sydney's West saying:

“Attendance is an indication of how well networked we are, if they (community care forums) are well attended they are obviously worthwhile and encouraging for the development worker and service providers.”

Advocacy

The services interviewed for the project indicated that an important aspect in the work of RDWs is their independence from statutory bodies (such as government agencies). This means they are able to offer different perspectives on certain issues with fewer restrictions with regard to departmental issues. The HDOs and RDWs are able to work with services to develop innovative and creative solutions.

Community care forums and inter-agencies have been identified as an important way that services get together, share opinions and decide on issues affecting the sector. RDWs are able to represent to the interests and needs of the services in these forums.

Individual Service Support

There is considerable experience among the sample of RDWs surveyed in this project. One officer has been in the position for approximately eighteen years, four officers in their positions for between five and ten years, two for between two and four years with only two officers who have been in their position for less than two years. This ongoing stability has been beneficial in building relationships and trust between RDWs and service providers. The research indicated that RDWs view building relationships and trust as a crucial part of their work. One RDW commented that:

“Gaining the trust of service providers is critical. They have to be able to come to you in order to ask for support. They may have issues they are apprehensive about and may not feel they can approach a worker in a government department”.

The service providers indicated that, while departmental representatives such as DADHC Project Officers are often useful sources of information and support for their service, the roles of DADHC Project Officers and RDWs differ in relation to the type of support given.

One service manager said that “currently Newcastle does not have a HDO so most information comes from the Project Officers of DADHC”. This highlights the potential complementary role of RDWs and DADHC Project Officers.

The services interviewed for this research indicated they were most likely to contact a DADHC Project Officer when there is a query relating to funding or with issues relating to DADHC.

Comments such as the following are representative of the responses that services gave in relation to how they decide whether to approach an RDW or departmental representative regarding issues that arise in their service:

“...depends on the nature of the issue. Would usually go first to HDO. I would only go to a DADHC Project Officer if it was necessary. The RDW is more in touch with what’s going on in the area – promoting various services or training workshops” *Service Provider, South West Sydney.*

“If I need information, I would go to the RDW. If it is something about funding, then I would go to a department officer. If we’re looking for ways to improve service delivery, then we would go to the RDW, as she has lots of contacts, knows all the services in the regions and comes to all the forums” *Service Provider Lithgow.*

“HDO is supportive, local, knows grass roots organisations, and is always there. DADHC Project Officers change and do not know individual organisations” *Service Provider Inner West.*

Even in an area without a RDW, funding body representatives such as DADHC Project Officers are generally approached regarding funding issues, rather than for service support. This is highlighted by a comment from a service provider in Nyngan:

“If I have a funding issue, I go to the departmental representative (DADHC Project Officer) and if it is a general services issue, ie recruiting volunteers etc, I talk to other service coordinators at our cluster or forum meetings.”

One service coordinator in the Hunter region said that:

“the DADHC Project Officer is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the Non-Government Organisations and the HACC Development Officer acts as

an advocate and works with the service, helping to develop brochures. They act more in a resource capacity for the service, in the nitty gritty of the business”.

In areas where there is no RDW, the services must spend the time forming networks and finding information in order to support each other. In the organisations that were surveyed who have larger administrative structures, the service managers indicated that they often have internal procedures to deal with administrative and training issues. However, these may not necessarily be shared with smaller organisations.

Support with Validation and Accountability Requirements

Service providers and RDWs in the survey gave examples of supporting services with implementing accountability requirements. Often, smaller services will ask a RDW about MDS packages. One Sydney HACC DO was able to support the coordinators of two services working on service standards and HACC Validation. The HACC DO provided an on-site visit to support the service to meet the HACC National Service Standards. In the Central West of NSW, services had not had the opportunity for training with MDS software for three years. The Officer in that region reported that 32 people attended a training day she was able to organise, a strong indication for the need of such training.

A RDW was identified by a food service provider in Nyngan as being crucial in assisting services with validation:

“There was a Food Service Development Officer position funded for two years and this service was invaluable to the food services in our area, many of which had new coordinators. Without this help many of the food services would not have passed validation”.

According to this service manager, this is one reason the Orana Community Service Forum has been lobbying for a RDW in Western NSW for some time.

Empowering Consumers

Four of the service coordinators stated that RDWs empower consumers in a number of ways. The RDWs conduct focus groups, surveys, advocate for policy on behalf of consumers and run consumer planning days. All of these strategies ensure that service users have the opportunity to have their say. One of the RDWs said that advocating on behalf of consumers and services ensures that government funding is better utilised, meeting the needs of clients.

One service coordinator said that often the RDW will forward information to the service provider that can be used with consumers, while two others said that by promoting their organisations and advising them of what service the consumers need, the result is a better service delivery for consumers. RDWs have been able to provide assistance with improving access to services for people of CALD backgrounds. This included translating material and suggesting training in cultural competency.

There were two RDWs who identified a stronger connection with those who are recipients of community care services rather than with those who provide the services.

A RDW working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identified some of the challenges in improving access to services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may have difficulty accessing culturally appropriate services and Aboriginal RDWs can play a vital role in improving access to services. The competing demands placed on Aboriginal RDWs in facilitating access to services for Aboriginal people as well as undertaking development work can be significant.

Opportunities for Improvement

While the survey of service providers identified the important role of RDWs, there are areas of their work that could be improved. Five service providers felt that the technical expertise of RDWs in the area of management expertise and budgeting could be improved. This could be an opportunity for training of RDWs.

The role of the Aged and Disability Workers and HDOs can be complementary. However, in some regions the roles of these workers and how they work together should be clarified. Themes from the survey results highlight that this depends upon the individual workers in particular regions. HDOs often cover several Local Government areas while Local Government workers focus on one or a couple of Local Government areas. It is important that workers in local regions identify how they can work collaboratively with DADHC, the Department of Health & Ageing and other relevant government departments.

There are significant differences in the funding levels of RDWs between local regions in NSW. For example, the Orana Far West region has historically had very low levels of funding for RDWs. The Illawarra region and parts of the Riverina also do not have access to a HDO.

It is important that there is equity between regions in funding levels of RDWs in community care that needs to be addressed by Australian, State and Local Governments. Funding for Local Government Aged and Disability Workers as well as HDOs may also be dependent on financial contributions from local councils which vary between regions.

Conclusion

RDWs provide important assistance to community care providers in NSW. Their work in regions across NSW is varied requiring a range of skills. Some of the most important work includes networking, information retrieval and dissemination, being able to identify unmet need and working with services and consumers to develop innovative service responses.

The survey sample for this research project was small and was designed to revisit some of the key themes and issues that emerged out of the HACC DO's Review undertaken by the Ageing & Disability Department in 1999.

Funding for RDWs in community care in NSW is a very small proportion of funding (just over 1% of total HACC funding in NSW) and is probably declining as a proportion of total funding. The varied roles of the RDWs and their key role in reducing fragmentation in local regions demonstrate an efficient investment of funding by government.

The funding of RDWs is a smart investment in infrastructure by Australian, State and local governments. However, equity between regions in terms of funding levels and workers requires closer examination. Australian, State and Local Governments need to examine the funding levels of RDWs between regions to ensure equity of access to support and information for community care services.

The research identified that RDWs are a valuable source of information regarding government policy, local issues and demographics, management and business advice, training and information for services improving access for people from CALD backgrounds. Information and training in cultural sensitivity (in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and CALD people) for service providers are also provided by Regional Development Workers.

While eight of the RDWs were able to identify recent opportunities they have had to conduct training courses themselves and they also promote training to the community care sector. This is important in terms of the training and career development needs of staff working in community care services. In areas without RDWs, these opportunities may not be present, as services are often not able to attend courses because of weight of demand for services and the lack of available relief staff.

As well as this, services interviewed for the research in areas without a RDW found they received less individual support, and have to make time to connect to other services by creating and maintaining networks themselves. This can create challenges in rural areas that may be more isolated because of the distance between services.

The research identified areas for improvement for RDWs which included having specialised training in areas such as management expertise and budgeting. Local Government workers and other RDWs (such as HDOs, Dementia Advisory Services and Transport Development Workers) need to work collaboratively with each other and with government agencies such as DADHC.

The findings clearly identified the vital role of RDWs in supporting services to manage and negotiate change. This critical role highlights the importance of workers who are regionally based to provide information and support to service providers in implementing government policy changes. This is particularly important given the likelihood of significant changes to the community care system in NSW over the next five years.

Bibliography

Ageing & Disability Department, (1999), *HACC Development Officers Report and Review*, Ageing & Disability Department, Sydney.

Australian Department of Health & Ageing. (2004) *The Way Forward: A New Strategy for Community Care*, Australian Department of Health & Ageing, Canberra

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2004), *Diversity Among Older Australians in Capital Cities 1996 – 2011*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra

Battellino, H., (2004) *Transport Development Workers Network - Position Paper*, Transport Development Network, Sydney

Community Care Industry Council, (2003) *Supporting Management to Manage Change*, Aged & Community Services Association of NSW & ACT, Sydney

Cox, E., and Caldwell, P., 2000, "Making Policy Social" in Ian Winter (ed), *Social Capital and Public Policy in Australia*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne

Stewart-Weeks, M., 2000, "Trick or Treat? Social Capital, Leadership and the New Public Policy", in Ian Winter (Ed), *Social Capital and Public Policy in Australia*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne

Productivity Commission, 2004, *Report on Government Services*, Productivity Commission, Canberra

Appendix One

Service Provider Survey

Survey of service providers regarding Regional Development Workers

Background: Regional Development Workers support the coordination and development of community care services. They provide support to services in providing information, undertaking planning, and other community development activities. These workers may be called HACC Development Officers, Local Government Aged and Disability workers, regionally based training officers, Transport Development Workers and Food Service Development Workers. This survey is part of a project that seeks to further understand the role of Regional Development Workers in NSW.

Name of organisation: _____

Region: _____

Name of person interviewed: _____

Position: _____

Date interviewed: _____

1. Is there a Regional Development officer who you are able to contact in your local area?

Yes No Unsure

2. Are you aware of the services offered by the regional development officers in your area?

Yes No Unsure

3. Is there a difference between the role of a regional development worker and a funding body representative, eg a Service support and development officer or project officer?

Yes No Unsure

- If yes, what are the main differences?

4. Do you know how to access information about the other services offered in your area?

Yes No

5. How do you decide whether to approach a departmental representative or development worker about an issue you are experiencing in your service?

6. Do Regional Development officers have the local knowledge and awareness of the community that you have found to be helpful? Yes No Mostly

7. What kind of support do you most need? Tick more than one box if appropriate:

- Training
 - Information about policy / program guidelines
 - Information about local issues / demographics
 - Information about other services
 - Information about insurance, corporate governance, other Management/business advice
 - Community Development
 - Service planning and regional planning
 - Publicity and promotion
 - Advocacy
 - Assistance with systems, protocols, for example, of integrated assessment, referral and service delivery
 - Computer/technology skills
 - Assistance in leadership and communication
 - Network creation
 - Other (Please specify)
-

8. What support does your local regional development worker (eg HACC DO, Local Government worker) provide to you?

9. In what ways do Regional Development Officers assist service providers in dealing with conflict and pressures associated with administration, budgeting, reporting etc? Can you give an example?

10. Are regional development officers a reliable source of information concerning relevant legislation and changes in government policy in your area of service provision?

Yes No Unsure

11. Approximately how often do you have contact with a regional development officer?

12. How or where is this contact made?

13. Do you participate in fora, inter-agencies etc. organised by regional development officers?

Yes No

- If yes, what are the benefits of these?

- If no, why not?

14. Do Regional Development Workers empower consumers in any way?

Yes No Unsure

- If yes, in what ways? Can you provide an example of this?

15. Any comments?

Appendix One

Regional Development Workers Survey

Survey of Regional Development Workers

Background: Regional Development Workers support the coordination and development of community care services in roles such as HACC development officers, local government Aged and Disability workers, regionally based training officers, transport development workers and food service development workers. This survey is part of a project that seeks to further understand the role of Regional Development Workers in NSW.

Organisation name: _____

Person interviewed: _____

Region: _____

Date interviewed: _____

1. How long have you been working in the role as a development officer in your region?

2. How important is your knowledge of the community and your relationship to the service providers in your area?

3. What are the main priorities and daily tasks that you undertake in your role as a Regional Development worker? What proportion of your time do you spend on these tasks?

<u>Activity:</u>	<u>Time:</u>
- Dissemination of information regarding:	
- Policy / program guidelines,	_____
- Local issues / demographics,	_____
- Other services,	_____
- Insurance, corporate governance, other Management/business advice	_____
- Community Development	_____
- Service planning and regional planning	_____
- Training	_____
- Publicity and promotion	_____
- Advocacy	_____
- Development of systems, protocols, for example, of integrated assessment, referral and service delivery	_____
- Computer/technology skills	_____

- Providing leadership and communication skills _____

- Network creation _____

Other (Please specify) _____

4. Can you give an example of where you have assisted in creating a network among service providers and the positive outcomes this created?

5. Do you provide information or assistance to service providers in reaching people of CALD backgrounds? Yes No

- If no, why not?

- If yes, what supports are needed for specific services providing community care for people of CALD backgrounds?

6. Do you provide information or assistance to service providers supporting people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities? Yes No

- If yes, what supports are needed in providing community care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island specific services?

7. Do you review and pass on information concerning relevant legislation and changes in government policy / related programs and other issues, likely to impact service providers?

Yes No

-If yes, how do you pass this information on to service providers?

8. Can you give an example where you have been able to provide training, information, or passed on certain skills to a service provider they may not have otherwise had access to?

9. How do you evaluate your work as a Regional Development Worker?

10. Are you involved in identifying: (a) unmet need for community services? Yes No or (b) starting new services? Yes No

- If yes for (a) or (b), can you provide an example where this has happened?

11. In what ways do you support organizations in complying with government legislation / program guidelines / program changes?

12. What work do you do to assist in reducing the fragmentation and duplication of community care services in your local region?

13. Please identify any other initiatives in your area which are the outcome of having a funded development position?

14. Other comments?

Appendix Two

List of Interviewees

Organisation	Regional Development Worker	Region
Inner South-West Community Development Organisation	Martha Arakas	Metro South-West and Metro South-East (Including 5 LGAs)
Western Sydney Community Forum	Beverley Stoch	Metro West (Including 8 LGAs)
Inner West Aboriginal Community Company	Merle May	Inner West (Including 7 LGAs)
Canada Bay city Council	Deborah Harvey	City of Canada Bay
Ashfield Municipal Council	Janine Fullen	Ashfield Municipality
New England HACC Development Inc.	Debra Pugh	New England
Broken Hill City Council	Heidi Ogden	Broken Hill and Far West
Gosford City Council	Robyn Howes	Central Coast
Orange City Council	Robyn Frost	Central West (Including 14 LGAs)
Service	Manager / Coordinator	
Beresfield and Districts Meals on Wheels	Cheryl Morton	Maitland and Newcastle LGAs
Bogan Food Service	Cheryl Burns	Nyngan
Warrumbungle Shire HACC Multi-Service Outlet	Maree Valusiak	Warrumbungle Shire
Baptist Community Services	Lyn Cleasby	Hunter
Community Options Illawarra Inc	Anja Nivala	Illawarra
Condobolin Homecare Service Outlet	Clare Dunne	Lachlan Shire
Mid West Community Care	Jacqui Burraston	Met North and Met West (Including 5 LGAs)
HACC Volunteer Training Project	Gillian Whalley Okafor	LGAs of Canterbury, Leichhardt and Marrickville
Lithgow Information and Neighbourhood Centre	Denis Ismay	City of Lithgow
Inner West Community Transport Inc	Francesca Martel	Inner and Greater Inner West
Broken Hill City Council Disability Services	Fred Banning	Broken Hill City Council

Appendix Three
Regional Development Workers in NSW by DADHC Region and
Local Government Areas
May 2005

Position	DADHC Region	Local Government Areas
HACC Development Worker	Metro North	Lane Cove, Mosman, Ryde, Hornsby, North Sydney, Willoughby, Manly, Hunters Hill, Ku-rin-gai, Pittwater, Warringah
HACC Development Officer	Metro South East	Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale
HACC Development Officer	Metro South East	Waverley, Woollahra, Randwick, City of Sydney, Botany
HACC Development Officer**	Metro South East	Sutherland, Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale
HACC Development Officer	Metro South East	Sutherland Shire
HACC Development Officer	Metro South West	Bankstown, Liverpool and Fairfield
HACC Development Officer	Metro South West	Strathfield, Burwood, Canada Bay and Leichhardt
HACC Development Officer	Metro South West	Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale, Marrickville, Canterbury
HACC Development Officer**	Metro South West	Strathfield, Burwood, Canada Bay and Leichhardt
HACC Development Officer	Metro South West	Campbelltown, Camden, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly
HACC Development Officer**	Metro West	Nepean, Cumberland-Prospect
HACC Development Officer	Metro West	Auburn, Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Holroyd, Parramatta, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Penrith
HACC Development Officer	Hunter	Gosford, Wyong
HACC Development Officer	Hunter	Scone, Muswellbrook, Murrundi , Singleton, Merriwa
HACC Development Officer	Hunter	Cessnock, Port Stephens, Maitland, Dungog
HACC Development Officer	Hunter	Lake Macquarie, Newcastle

Position	DADHC Region	Local Government Areas Covered
HACC Development Officer**	Northern	Coffs Harbour City, Bellingen Shire, Nambucca, Kempsey Shire, Hastings Municipality, Greater Taree City, Gloucester Shire, Great Lakes Shire
HACC Development Officer	Northern	Coffs Harbour City, Bellingen Shire, Nambucca, Kempsey Shire, Hastings Municipality, Greater Taree City, Gloucester Shire, Great Lakes Shire
HACC Development Officer	Northern	Tenterfield, Glen Innes & Severn, Guyra, Armidale, Dumaresq, Uralla, Walcha, Tamworth Region, Liverpool Plains, Gunnedah, Narrabri, Moree Plains, Gwydir, Inverell
HACC Development Officer	Northern	Ballina, Byron, Copmanhurst, Grafton, Kyogle, Maclean, Pristine Waters, Richmond River and Tweed Heads
HACC Development Officer	Western	Bathurst, Blayney, Boorowa, Cabonne, Cowra, Evans, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Rylstone, Weddin
HACC Development Officer	Western	Wentworth, Balranald, Wakool, Carrathool, Hay, Murrumbidgee, Conargo, Jerilderie, Leeton, Urana, Berrigan, Murray, Corowa, Hume, Holbrook, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Gundagai, Young, Temora, Coolamon, Narrandera, Lockhart, Wagga Wagga, Culcairn, Holbrook, Junee, Harden, Griffith, Albury, Cootamundra, Deniliquin
HACC Development Officer	Southern Highlands	Bega Valley, Bombala, Boorowa, Cooma Monaro, Eurobodalla, Greater Argyle, Greater Queanbeyan, Harden, Snowy River, Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley, Young
Food Services Development Worker***	Western Sydney	Western Sydney area
Multicultural Food Services Development Worker	South West Sydney	Liverpool, Fairfield, Bankstown
Food Services Development Worker	Metro South East	South East Sydney
Transport Development Worker	Metro South East	South East Sydney
Transport Development Worker	Northern	Northern Rivers
Transport Development Worker	Metro South West	Wollondilly, Camden, Campbelltown, Liverpool, Bankstown, Fairfield, Holroyd, Parramatta, Auburn, Baulkham Hills
Transport Development Worker	Metro South West	Liverpool and Fairfield
Transport Development Worker	Hunter	Cessnock
Transport Development Worker	Central Coast	Central Coast

Position	DADHC Region	Local Government Areas Covered
Mobility Coordinator	Metro South West	Inner West – Sydney
Mobility Coordinator	Central Coast	Central Coast
Transport Development Worker	Southern	Eurobodalla Shire
Aboriginal Transport Development Worker****	Northern	Northern Rivers Area
Aboriginal Transport Development Worker	Northern	Northern Rivers Area
Multicultural Access Project Worker*****	Metro South East	Southern Sydney
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Metro South East	Six Local Government Areas of Eastern Sydney
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Metro North	Northern Sydney
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Metro South West	Bankstown, Fairfield and Liverpool
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Metro West	Nepean and surrounding LGAs
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Metro West	Western Sydney and surrounding areas
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Metro West	Cumberland Prospect
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Hunter	Hunter
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Hunter	Gosford and Wyong
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Northern	Northern region
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Northern	Northern region
Multicultural Access Project Worker	Southern	Illawarra

* Information obtained in this table was sourced from a range of documents and some positions may have changed.

** Aboriginal HACC Development Officer

*** Food Services Development Workers in Northern Sydney and the Orana Far West were funded on a non-recurrent basis for a fixed term period. These positions have not been recurrently funded.

**** Transport Development Workers, Mobility Co-ordinators and Aboriginal Transport Development Workers work across local government areas to improve access to transport. Funding for these positions varies significantly between regions. Some regions have access to these workers and many regions don't have access to workers.

***** Multicultural Access Projects are funded through the HACC program to improve access to services for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds. Many projects are funded on a part-time basis and funding levels vary vastly from region to region.