



# Program of Research

# Project Closure Report

*The Workforce Coordination project is part of the Local People in Local Jobs initiative, supported by the Tasmanian Government through the Department of State Growth. The project is delivered in partnership with TasCOSS on behalf of the social services sector peak bodies and the Tasmanian peak bodies of ACCPA (now Ageing Australia), NDS, ECA Tasmania Branch (contracted to Lady Gowrie Tasmania).*



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## Executive Summary

For community service leaders in Tasmania, an evidence base is crucial to address workforce issues. The aim of the program of research throughout 2022-2024 has been to support thoughtful responses in a complex environment by building local knowledge of workforce challenges and solutions.

The objective of the program of research, as part of the Workforce Coordination Project (WCP) was to understand and apply current thinking about the workforce, assess gaps in local knowledge and begin to address this through targeted studies in conjunction with university and industry partners. This objective has been met with an opportunity to make an evidence-informed contribution to community services at both national and regional levels, as detailed in these pages. The program of research has achieved much in a short space of time and results indicate the following:

- 1. The voices of workers are crucial to determine strategies for best practice in workforce training and development, and studies that listen to and incorporate perspectives from the ground up strengthen our responses to the current workforce crisis in community services.*
- 2. Partnerships between industry and universities brings multiple perspectives to the table, ensuring that rigor is achieved, and awareness is raised in new networks about the important role of the care economy in Australia.*
- 3. There is great scope for ongoing place-based research in Tasmania that centres innovative practice, and which those in other jurisdictions can learn from as they also address local workforce challenges.*
- 4. The sharing of knowledge and research can lead to significant growth opportunities at a national level in collaboration with stakeholders such as the Councils of Social Services network, unions and academic institutes across the country and the world.*

The program of research, as a core aspect of the WCP, has had a significant impact on workforce development across the four sectors of aged care, education and care, disability and social services in Tasmania through research creation, knowledge sharing and data collection and distribution. As such, this project was guided by *The Community Services Industry Plan 2021-2031*, Priority 2: Workforce development and training - Ensuring the industry has the skilled and diverse workforce it needs to deliver flexible, responsive services that can withstand future disruptors and achieve positive outcomes for clients.

### 1. Background of the Project

Background research for the *Tasmanian Community Services Industry Plan 2021-2031* which was conducted by TasCOSS during 2018-2020 found that thousands of new workers were needed in community services over the next decade, and a targeted focus on recruitment and retention would help community services to function effectively in a high demand environment. But where do those roles sit, who can industry target to fill them

and how can we keep current staff engaged, were some of the questions that drove the research agenda of the WCP. Our aim was to develop a schedule of research that identified common industry and sector specific issues and build the capacity of the industry through the sharing of evidence. We did this by analyzing baseline data about the current workforce and government reports about roles and occupations.

The program of research began with a desktop review of the community services workforce developed by Dr Naomi Sidebotham in 2022. This paper outlined some of the challenges, local context and national initiatives relevant to Tasmania. Findings included that staff were needed in high numbers and more training was required by current staff to meet complex reporting requirements. There was a lack of evidence that centred the voices of current employees and a high level of churn. This review was instrumental in forging research relationships with the Marketing discipline at UTAS to further understand local recruitment and retention challenges and opportunities.

The program of research also supported other aspects of the WCP, especially the awareness and recruitment campaign and the Coalition Network Meetings, where, in conjunction with industry, we developed and acted upon key insights about the shortages and the needs with collective action. Finally, we also collected anecdotal evidence through recording our conversations with industry leaders and practitioners. We anonymised and documented 167 conversations where staff discussed their problems on the ground and potential solutions. This gave us a depth of insight into supply, bridging and demand activities. The program of research has built and used evidence to inform government and industry leaders about the challenges the community services workforce face and some of their great innovations.

## 2. Highlights and innovations

The program of research has met two main goals of the Workforce Coalition, as outlined in the *Community Services Industry Plan 2021-2031*, Priority Two Actions, 2.1, Workforce Training and Development:

- *Defining and driving a program of research to identify future industry demand trends, as well as barriers and opportunities to employment in the Tasmanian community services industry (including community perceptions) and workforce and skill development priorities.*
- *Strengthening the community services industry's evidence base and apply research to improve client outcomes through the formation of partnerships across the industry, government, vocational and tertiary education, and business sectors.*

## Highlights of research

- 
**Archetype study – first in Australia**
- 
**ANZSCO Review updated**
- 
**Anecdotal evidence from participants in project summarised**

### Archetype study

This has occurred through brokering relationships with UTAS academics in the Tasmanian School of Business and Economics, to raise awareness of the staff shortages across aged care, education and care, disability and social services, and to convene research about the local frontline workforce. The *Worker Recruitment and Retention in the Care Economy: Community Services Worker Archetypes as a Way Forward* study was undertaken with a team from UTAS, Murdoch University and the WCP. In this qualitative study

we interviewed 40 frontline workers across the four sectors to ask questions about their most enjoyable and challenging days on the job. We heard their stories about motivation to enter this type of work and we analysed values and attributes to build typologies of best fit workers. The results of this research will be disseminated to the industry in 2025.

### **Australia and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) now revised to Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) review.**

Another highlight was the ongoing contribution we made to the ANZSCO Codes (now OSCA) review beginning with our session at the inaugural Coalition Network Meeting where we asked leaders and managers to document the shortages they were facing now and into the future, using the current list of occupations. In consultation with the industry, we were able to submit evidence to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for better categorisation of roles and participated in several online sessions with ABS staff to inform code development. The updated classification system was released on 06 December 2024 with identified changes to occupations and descriptors.

### **Anecdotal Evidence**

A final highpoint has been the documentation of 167 conversations with industry leaders to map out significant challenges in recruitment and retention and detailing grassroots solutions. This documented evidence, while anecdotal in nature, can be used to convene further studies about the community services workforce, especially focusing upon what is going well and where solutions are emergent. The results of this research will be disseminated to the industry in 2025.

## Project Performance






### 3. Summary


The main outcomes of the program of research were as follows:

- A qualitative research project about frontline workers in aged care, disability, education and care and social services was successfully designed, undertaken and achieved in partnership with UTAS, Murdoch University and the WCP.
- Informed the national ANZSCO Codes, now OSCA review process at each stage of review of occupations in community services during 2023-2024 and supported partners, peaks and organisations to make submissions for to? the review.
- Documented anecdotal evidence to inform strategic development of workforce discussions and future research activities.
- Other key achievements included knowledge collection, dissemination and awareness raising of workforce issues with university partners and industry leaders.

### 4. Breakdown of Achievements

Outcome	Description	Timeframe	Objective	Supporting Evidence
<i>Desktop review</i>	Summary of current research, gap analysis and workforce trends and opportunities.	Completed 2022. ✓	Understand current issues and where further research would be useful.	Appendix A
<i>MOU</i>	Memo of understanding between TasCOSS and UTAS for mutual collaboration for joint activities in education, governance and research.	Signed 07/02/23 and valid for 3 years from this date. ✓	To facilitate industry and university partnerships with clarity and commitment.	Appendix B
<i>Data library</i>	Collection of resources, studies and reports for the WRT and other stakeholders.	2022-2024 ✓	To build collective knowledge and map gaps, trends and opportunities.	Held by TasCOSS, available for industry.

<i>UTAS lectures in management discipline and supervision of student projects.</i>	Project Manager and Senior Officer delivered lectures to students about community services workforce and supported students in their practicum assignments to study community services workforce challenges.	2022-2023 	To inform students about community services workforce and support them to study relevant issues.	
<i>Brokered connections with UTAS academiccommunity services.</i>	Put together a research team from industry and university and developed proposal for study.	2022-2023 	To study one workforce issue – recruitment and retention of frontline workers.	Appendix C
<i>Employment White paper and Youth Job Strategy submission support</i>	Gained stakeholder feedback and outlined local issues and context in two submissions for federal enquires.	2022 (white paper) 2023 (youth jobs strategy) 		Appendix D and E
<i>Archetype research project in partnership with UTAS and Murdoch Uni.</i>	Ethiccommunity services application, recruitment of 40 participants, interviews, transcription and data analysis, 2 workshop presentations to industry leaders and final report for industry.	2022-2024 	To study the frontline worker experience across aged cared, disability, education and care and social services	Final report due Dec 2024.
<i>ANZSCO (OSCA) Codes review</i>	Supported partners, peaks and organisations to submit to review, using data collected at Workforce Coalition Network Meeting. Joined 2 codes review	2023-2024 	To correctly classify occupation skills and levels, including the addition of new occupations.	

	webinars with ABS to discuss new roles in community services. Gave written feedback to ABS about current and future roles.			
<i>Anecdotal evidence collection and analysis</i>	Documented 167 conversations with community services leaders in Tasmania outlining issues and solutions.	2023-2024 	To more fully understand the local context and support future research goals.	Appendix F Summary. Full report held by TasCOSS.

## 5. Major findings

1. Industry leaders are eager to participate in research and government enquires that builds knowledge about their workforce but can feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of requests while also working in service delivery. This is where the research arm of a peak body can support industry through knowledge development and summary, translation of findings and support to submit.
2. The WCP was crucial in assisting peak bodies and service providers to frame their own submissions for the Employment White Paper, Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy and the ANZSCO (OSCA) Codes review. We did this by providing timely evidence to support claims and by discussing the issues with leaders, as needed.
3. The ANZSCO (OSCA) Codes review of occupations in community services was long overdue and Tasmanian community services leaders have now had the opportunity to influence the ABS to recognise new occupations and more complex use of skills in current occupations. This review helped the industry and government to better describe some occupations as they apply to community services as well as for-profit industries and outlined the occupations that would now be applied to the industry due to changes resulting from the Royal Commissions in Aged Care and Disability, e.g. data analysts, compliance specialists and risk assessors. This work was also an education piece for many local industry leaders, who built their understanding about the importance of the ABS accurately reflecting the scope of work that is occurring in aged care, disability, education and care and social services. Such recognition helps community services advocate for increased pay using more accurate codes and helps us understand current and future demand to inform strategy development. This was a timely review for the Workforce Coordination Project and community services.



4. How the industry understands itself directly contributes to how the broader community sees our work. If we can increase self-understanding and dialogue based upon evidence while building greater collaboration between university and industry, we can address workforce issues with knowledge, wisdom and ongoing learning.
5. Frontline workers have insight into how organisations and services can operate in ethical and just ways, and how they are already doing so, as articulating good practice can build the capacity of management in the industry.
6. Local research that applies good practice principles feeds directly into place-based work and will help with recruitment and retention in places where staff are needed, especially in regional areas of Tasmania.
7. The Tasmanian community services workforce can have direct input into the national conversation about fair wages for the industry, accurate understanding of the breadth and depth of our work and celebration of what is being done well, as we speak with collective and diverse voices. A focus on research has enabled us do this with clarity and context in the Workforce Coordination Project.

## 6. Recommendations

- ◆ Undertake a detailed knowledge translation project based upon the findings from the *Worker Recruitment and Retention in the Care Economy: Community Services Worker Archetypes as a Way Forward*. This will happen in early 2025, to make the most of the research findings and disseminate the knowledge widely.
- ◆ Renew the MOU with UTAS in due course and broker further studies and partnerships to meet evidence collection needs of the *Tasmanian Community Services Industry Plan 2021-2031*, as the opportunities arise and in line with emergent anecdotal findings.
- ◆ Expand the awareness of, and understanding about, lived experience and the impact that personal experience has on workforce recruitment and retention through participatory action research, building upon what we already know through the Archetype research project.
- ◆ Further develop peer support networks across the industry. Team comardarie and learning experiences, in a safe environment, keep staff engaged and feeling supported which is crucial for retention and best practice. Peer based workforce learning is an underestimated aspect of knowledge development and further research about the role of peers, communities of practice and andragogy in the field is needed. Microcredentials and access to university schools of learning could be aligned with a greater focus on this type of innovative field education.

- ◆ Continue collecting data from statewide network meetings, and help inform the national conversation about community services with HumanAbility and other federal stakeholders, who may not have ready access to local perspectives.

## 7. Conclusion

While the program of research was not included in any formal deed, it was a pivotal part of the Workforce Coordination Project and has delivered key achievements for the benefit of the Tasmanian community services workforce. Staff are highly engaged in supporting local research, are attuned to new thinking and want to be informed by evidence as they develop and design new programs. The Workforce Coordination Project has gone some way to meeting this goal and the research component was well received by industry leaders who understand the value of evidence in making informed decisions.

Thank you to everyone who supported the program of research – scholars and teachers from UTAS and Murdoch University, all interview participants, leadership in aged care, education and care, disability and social services who invited staff to participate and industry workers who discussed issues with the team.

## 8. Other Documentation Provided

### **Workforce Coordination Project**

#### ***Project of Research Budget 2022-2024***

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Total</b>
Recruitment for interviews FB post boost x 2.	\$50 each boost	<b>\$100</b>
Gift cards x 40 people for research participation.	\$50 each gift card	<b>\$2000</b>
Transcription services for 36 research interviews.	\$252 – invoice #TC1054196316 \$627 – invoice #TC0681134641 \$78 – invoice #TC0107523641 \$150 – invoice #TC0856124976 \$313.50 – invoice #TC0410523252 \$48 – invoice #TC0002253050 \$597 – invoice #TC0295871774	<b>\$2838.82</b>

	\$538.50 – invoice #TC0295871774 \$234.82 – invoice #TC0692139090	
	<b>TOTAL \$4938.82</b>	

## Footprints of the project for the industry



# Research Project

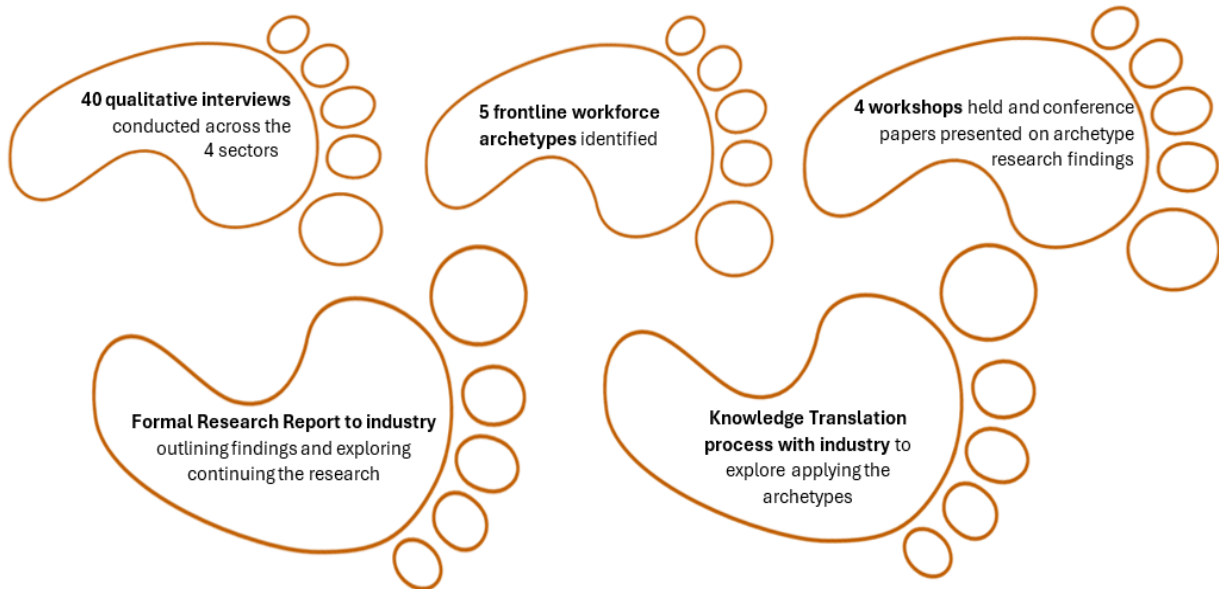
## Our Big Footprints – what we achieved together





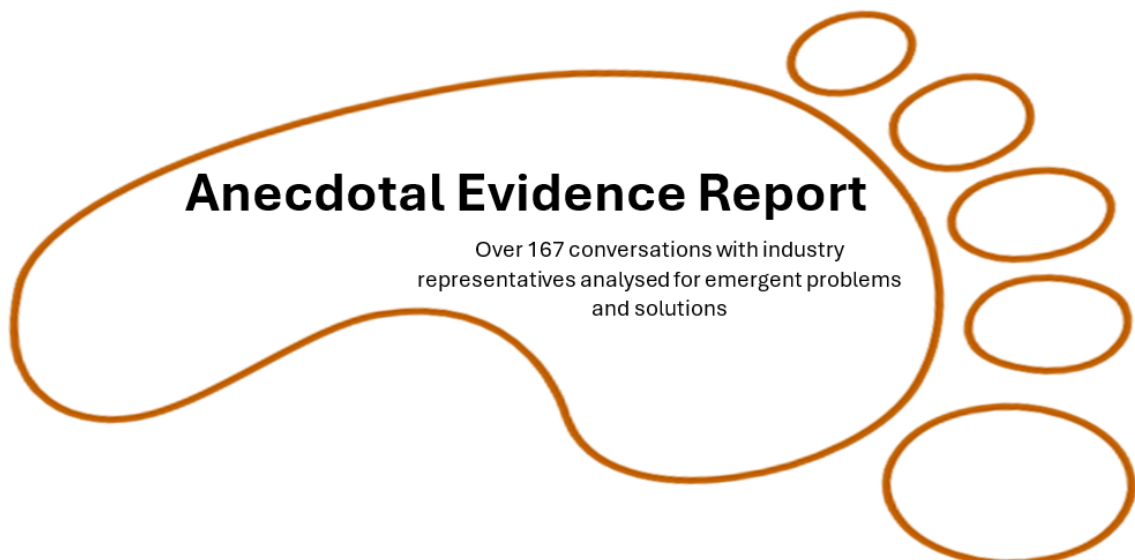
# Archetype Study

## Our Little Footprints – what we achieved together



# Research Project

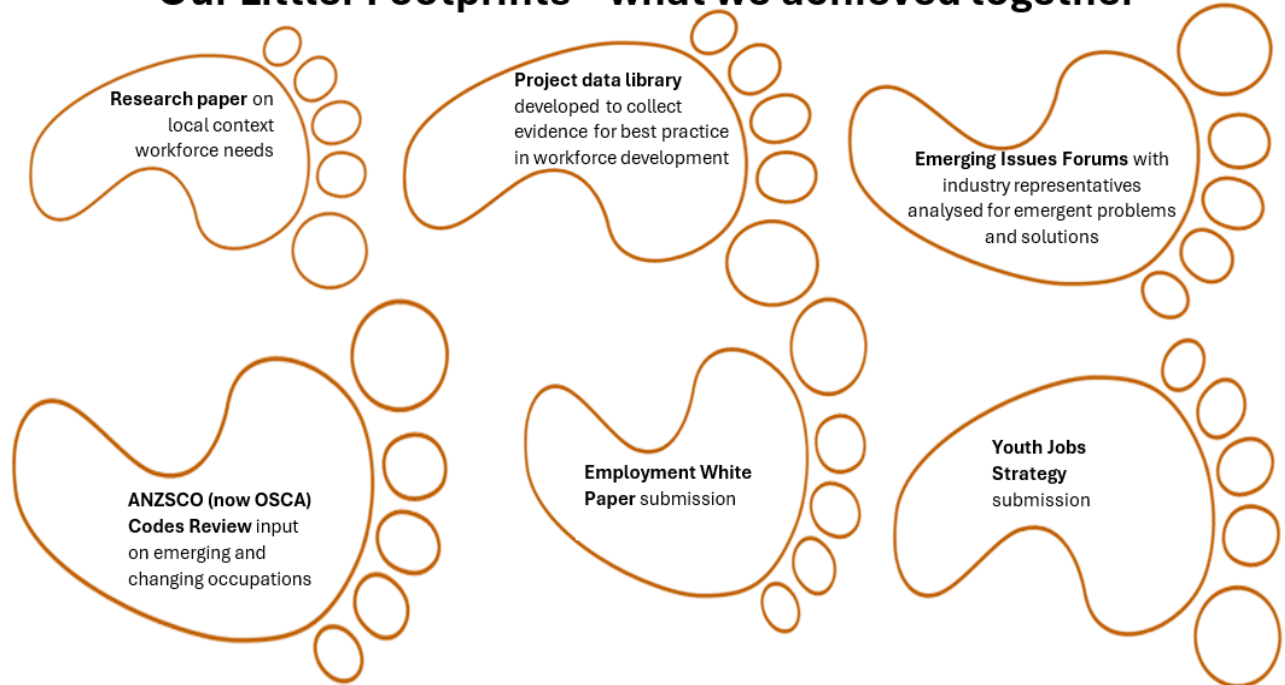
## Our Big Footprints – what we achieved together





# Research Project

## Our Littler Footprints – what we achieved together



## Appendices

*See attached zip folder for the following:*

Appendix A - Industry Workforce Overview

Appendix B – MOU\_TasCOSS

Appendix C – Research Proposal Final Version for Coalition

Appendix D – TASCROSS Submission Employment White Paper Nov 22

Appendix E – WCP Youth Job Strategy Paper – submission support

Appendix F – Anecdotal Evidence Summary Report Nov 24