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Dear Ms Brown,

Mental Health Victoria (MHV) welcomes this opportunity to provide input into SkillsIQ's review of individual support, ageing and disability qualifications, in particular the *Certificate III in Individual Support* and *Certificate IV in Disability* (the Qualifications).

MHV is the peak body for the mental health sector in Victoria. Our members include consumer and carer groups, community health, mental health and psychosocial services, hospitals, medical associations and colleges, police and emergency services associations, unions, local governments, and other bodies across the health and related sectors.

The need for a robust and skilled disability workforce is only increasing with time. The review of the Qualifications presents a significant opportunity to ensure this workforce has adequate entry-level skills to better meet the needs of people with psychosocial disability, and people with other disability types and mental illness (dual disability).

To achieve this, MHV strongly recommends SkillsIQ ensure:

- 1. the performance outcomes of the Victorian Accredited Course unit [VU22859: Provide support to consumers with psychosocial disability](#) are integrated with performance outcomes of the Qualifications.**
- 2. [CHCMHS007: Work effectively in trauma informed care](#) is included as an elective in the *Certificate IV in Disability*.**
- 3. where possible, the principles of 4 key frameworks that should underpin all disability support work for people with psychosocial and dual disabilities are embedded.**

Recommendations 1 and 2 are made as matters of priority. However, if time does not permit the implementation of recommendation 1, as an alternative we support the Victorian Government's advice to ensure flexible packaging so that Victorian Accredited Course units (including VU22859) can be selected as electives.

In addition to this advice, MHV has made comments on the [SkillsIQ Forum](#) as to how these training products can be improved. Although these comments are not a complete response, it is worth noting that MHV is currently working on a comprehensive strategy to better orient VET sector qualifications to address mental health and psychosocial disability.

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Further advice and recommendations will be provided to relevant Industry Reference Groups by the end of 2021.

There is an increasing need to grow a disability workforce skilled to support people with psychosocial and dual disabilities

Up to 690,000 Australians could benefit from some form of psychosocial support.¹ Despite this, the 290,000 or so people with the highest level of need currently lack the support or level of support they need.² We also know that 32% of adults with disability (and 40% of participants with profound disabilities) experience high or very high levels of psychological distress, as opposed to 8% of adults without disability.³

In response to this need the Productivity Commission recommended that the States/Territories and the Commonwealth Governments work together to increase quantum funding for psychosocial supports.⁴ With negotiations for a National Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention underway, psychosocial supports outside the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are likely to be a key focus.

Within the NDIS the numbers of people with psychosocial disability and dual disability are also significant and growing. Statistics indicate that:

- participants with a primary psychosocial disability are approaching 50,000, 10% of all participants, projected to increase to 64,000 (13.9%).
- approximately 17% of all participants have a dual disability.

As these figures show, this review constitutes a critical opportunity to ensure the Qualifications sufficiently prepare the disability workforce to adequately support people with psychosocial and dual disability.

Embed the principles of key frameworks in the Qualifications to ensure workers have the appropriate skills

Since the transition to the NDIS the number of organisations and workers with experience providing mental health services has declined. Now, despite some workers having the Qualifications, most have little or no skills, knowledge, or experience (and therefore confidence) supporting people with psychosocial or dual disability. As a result, providers report significant challenges attracting and retaining staff willing and able to provide these skilled supports.

Providing appropriate supports to people with psychosocial and dual disability requires a specific knowledge and skill set. The current elective unit *CHCMHS001 Work with people with mental health issues* does not adequately equip disability support workers with the skills and knowledge they need to safely and effectively support people with psychosocial and dual disabilities.

¹ Productivity Commission 2020 Final Report: Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health, vol. 3, p. 827.

² *ibid.*

³ ABS 2019, Microdata: National Health Survey, 2017–18. ABS cat. no. 4324.0.55.001 Canberra: ABS.

⁴ Productivity Commission 2020, *ibid.*

While we support the current inclusion of the elective *CHCMHS001 Work with people with mental health issues*⁵, it is critically important that the day-to-day provision of disability support is based on the principles within key frameworks relevant to the lived experience of people with psychosocial and dual disability, which differ from people living with other disability types.

Disability workers supporting people with psychosocial and dual disabilities require knowledge about the common personal, historical, structural, and cultural factors that impact the inclusion, participation, and recovery of these groups. This might include, for example:

- experiences of social stigma, self-stigma, and discrimination (against people with mental illness or other intersecting issues, such as, addiction, low income, other forms of disability etc.).
- psychological impacts of trauma
- functional impacts of mental illness, especially episodic wellness
- complexity arising from involvement with multiple services across sectors, including justice, health, housing, homelessness, alcohol and other drugs, and employment.

In order to ensure the delivery of safe and effective support to people with psychosocial and dual disabilities, 4 key frameworks should underpin this work:

1. recovery oriented practice
2. social and emotional wellbeing
3. self-determination and choice
4. trauma-informed practice

Embedding the principles within these frameworks in the Qualifications will allow disability support workers to better understand the needs of people with psychosocial and dual disability, which will help them to, for example, support recovery, interact safely and appropriately (including responding to times of crisis) and support the person to make their own decisions.

The centrality of these frameworks to disability support work is supported by the following key documents:

- MHV's Psychosocial Capability Framework 2020
- [The NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission's NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#)
- The NDIA's draft Recovery Oriented Practice Framework

Ideally, the Qualifications would include a skill set that embeds the principles within these frameworks to ensure the delivery of safe and effective disability supports to people with psychosocial and dual disability. However, due to the review's current timeframes, we recommend that Skills IQ integrate the performance outcomes of these Qualifications with the existing Victorian Accredited Course unit [VU22859: Provide support to consumers with psychosocial disability](#). In addition to this, for the *Certificate IV in Disability*, we

⁵ and other relevant mental health skills across a range of units, including: to recognise and report mental health issues when they arise, skills to refer to specialists when mental health treatment is required and indicators of mental ill health.

recommended that the existing unit [CHCMHS007: Work effectively in trauma informed care](#) is available as an elective.

In summary, the urgent need to provide adequate supports to people with psychosocial disability and dual disability along with the growth in the delivery of disability supports for people with mental illness, means that the *Certificate III Individual Support* and *Certificate IV Disability* are critical qualifications in meeting the growing need for an effectively skilled, entry-level care workforce.

To immediately address the gap in skills to support these groups, the *Certificate III Individual Support* and *Certificate IV Disability* should reference the performance outcomes of the Victorian unit VU22859. The *Certificate IV Disability* should also include unit CHCMHS007 as an elective. Where possible, action should be taken to develop a compressive skill set which embeds the principles of those frameworks that are essential to working with people with psychosocial and dual disabilities.

MHV again thanks SkillsIQ for the opportunity to contribute to this vital piece of work and welcomes any further opportunity to provide more detailed advice.

For further information on this submission, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Larissa Taylor
Director of Policy
Mental Health Victoria