



RCAA

Rehabilitation Counselling
Association of Australasia

26 September 2017

Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

RCAA is the professional association exclusively representing the interests of Australasian Rehabilitation Counsellors (RCs) with tertiary qualifications in rehabilitation counselling.

RCAA requests that the Provider Guide to Suitability be updated to include the Allied Health discipline of Rehabilitation Counselling in numerous services and support categories, which will be further detailed below.

As a profession, rehabilitation counselling evolved from post-world war vocational rehabilitation for returned services personnel. Since that time, the major focus and core skill-set of RCs has become the provision of vocational and occupational rehabilitation services for people experiencing illness, injury, and disability, including mental illness, such that these conditions affect people's capacity to obtain and maintain gainful employment.

Rehabilitation counselling practice includes interventions to assess and improve psychosocial, physical, emotional, and vocational functioning of individuals who experience vocational disadvantage. Rehabilitation Counsellors have provided professional services within personal injury management and vocational rehabilitation systems for many decades. Indeed, vocational assessment, needs assessment, planning and career counselling; job development and placement; case management and, workplace disability management, are among the core competencies and expertise of Rehabilitation Counsellors (Matthews, et al., 2010; Matthews et al., 2015). Rehabilitation Counsellors are specifically trained at the tertiary level to professionally serve people with disabilities through assessment, case management, vocational and avocational rehabilitation.

RCAA is writing to you on behalf of its members and people with disabilities in Australia as we have identified various services under the NDIS in which RCs are uniquely qualified to provide, but have been omitted under the listed professions, despite Rehabilitation Counselling being acknowledged by NDIA as a mandatory qualification for the role of APS 6 Advisor- Disability Management Professional. We respectfully request that you include the professional Allied Health discipline of Rehabilitation Counselling into the following services, which align with the skills, knowledge and expertise of RCs:

Assistance to access and maintain employment or higher education (0102):

RCs are the only Allied Health Profession within Australian Tertiary Education settings who undertake **core** academic training in the vocational evaluation process, particularly pertaining to people with disabilities. RC training in this domain encompasses vocational assessment and planning, career development and counselling and vocational training, job matching and job placement.

RCs, and Australian University Rehabilitation Counselling programs are required to demonstrate adherence to the following:

- Administration and interpretation of vocational assessments, including occupational interests, work values and work personality, and vocational attributes and abilities tests;
- Review of the medical information with persons to determine vocational implications of any identified limitations/restrictions;
- Identify transferable work skills by analysing clients' work history and functional assets and limitations;
- Generate suitable job options consistent with interests, abilities, and functional capacities, together with work environments, legislative restrictions and organisational policies;
- Match client needs, characteristics and aptitudes to job characteristics and requirements;
- Review the implications of assessment and findings with clients;
- Undertake observations about work personality characteristics and adjustment;
- Conduct labour market analysis/research;
- Apply job market knowledge to locating and securing employment for clients;
- Advise clients on job market conditions;
- Assist clients to set realistic and congruent goals related to jobsearch;
- Provide careers counselling service;
- Provide advice regarding desirable work behaviours to improve employability;
- Match client stated interests and values to realistic vocational choices;
- Assist clients to develop jobsearch skills;
- Identify educational and training requirements for specific jobs;
- Arrange required training to maintain a successful job placement;
- Identify and rate individual work personality characteristics in an actual or simulated work environment;
- Provide support counselling to prepare clients for stress of jobsearch;
- Promote people with disabilities to prospective employers;
- Monitor persons with disabilities once in employment to assist with successful and sustainable outcome and determine ongoing or changing needs.

Griffith University's Master of Rehabilitation Counselling Degree ensures that RCs have advanced knowledge and skills in this area through the completion of the following courses:

Vocational Evaluation

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=1&profileId=92836

Job Development and Placement

<https://degrees.griffith.edu.au/Course/7311AHS?courseListOrigin=C0000010144&programOfOrigin=5578>

Vocational Decision Making

<https://degrees.griffith.edu.au/Course/7329AHS?courseListOrigin=C0000010146&programOfOrigin=5578>

RCs currently apply their knowledge to vocational assessment and planning, career development and counselling and vocational training, job matching and job placement services within workers' compensation, traffic accident schemes, life insurance, disability employment and job active services across the country. As RCs also undertake disability related courses as part of their overall program of study, they are often employed by Specialist providers such as Vision Australia and Spinal Life.

Rehabilitation Counsellors are identified within the NSW Lifetime Care and Support as the preferred Allied Health Professional to provide vocational rehabilitation services. The expertise of Rehabilitation Counsellors was demonstrated by the success of a pilot In-Voc program within spinal injuries units, which reported an almost tripling of return to work rates during the pilot program. During the pilot period, more than 50% of all participants had returned to work or training after 12 months in the program, with almost two thirds returning to work or training after 24 months. The national average return to work rate after spinal cord injury was 30.8% at that time.

The University of Sydney completed a survey with people working in the life insurance industry, regarding Employability Assessment in Total and Permanent Disability (TPD) claims. On the question of who is best qualified to complete Employability Assessments, 56% of respondents answered that Rehabilitation Counsellors were best qualified, with 36% of respondents listing Occupational Therapists. Rehabilitation Counsellors feature heavily in this specialised area of assessment following illness, injury or disability as the combination of their academic learning and workplace experience makes them recognised as experts in this field.

Assistance in coordinating or managing life stages, transitions and supports (0106):

Rehabilitation Counsellors undertake academic training to identify, coordinate and supply the resources needed for effective rehabilitation/habilitation. RCAA accreditation and membership criteria requires Rehabilitation Counselling graduates are taught and assessed on the following areas:

- Use assessment data to highlight a person's abilities for the purposes of rehabilitation planning;
- Understand the aspects and implications of disability and common interventions;
- Have knowledge of disability and rehabilitation;
- Have knowledge of community services and government bodies relevant to people with disabilities;
- Perform client advocacy and marketing;
- Consult with medical professionals regarding functional capacities, prognoses and treatment plans;
- Identify, access and coordinate resources for effective rehabilitation/habilitation, including selection of appropriate rehabilitation or educational services;
- Apply principles pertaining to the legislation;
- Apply knowledge and resources to improve social participation, including community programs and assistive technologies;
- Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure that services are coordinated, timely and appropriate;
- Demonstrate clear understanding of the individual's disability;
- Undertake thorough rehabilitation/habilitation planning.

RC knowledge is derived from courses such as the following currently situated within the Master of Rehabilitation Counselling at Griffith University:

Introduction to Rehabilitation Counselling

<https://degrees.griffith.edu.au/Course/7303AHS?courseListOrigin=C0000010144&programOfOrigin=5578>

Perspectives on Disability

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=4&profileId=95207

Injury and Disability Management

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=4&profileId=92721

Conversations on Disability

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=4&profileId=93019

Understanding Mental Health: Theories and Practice

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=1&profileId=92584

Comorbidity on Mental Health

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=4&profileId=92931

Disability: The Inclusion Project

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=4&profileId=97042

Person Centred Planning

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=1&profileId=96846

RCs are recognised by NDIA as suitably qualified to work in the role of APS 6 Advisor-Disability Management Professional, which acknowledges RCs are equipped to provide specialist disability management advice and support to NDIS Planners. RCs currently apply their specialist knowledge and skills within the NSW Lifetime Care and Support Scheme as Service Coordinators, where they utilise their academic training to provide case management and planning services. Additionally, RCs work within the Return to Work SA Serious Injury Unit, in the role of Disability Support Consultant. This role also entails assessment, case management and planning for people following catastrophic injuries. Furthermore, Western Australia's Catastrophic Injury Scheme also features Rehabilitation Counselling as a relevant tertiary qualification for the position of Care Services Coordinator.

RCs are trained to adopt a person-centred approach in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UN, 2006). RCs work within an individual choice, strengths based case management model that supports the use of internal and external resources.

RCAA supports person-centred models which involve individuals having choice over how their funding is managed (Broady, 2014). In fact, RCAA recommended the consideration of participant control of funding in employment services in a submission to Department of Social Services in 2016, demonstrating that similar models had been implemented with varying degrees of success in other schemes in Australia and internationally (RCAA, 2016).

RCs operate with the core aim of respectful and collaborative partnerships with people with disability and stakeholders. As such, RCs work collaboratively with family members because understanding the needs of family members and knowing how to assist families to meet their needs is an important factor in providing effective rehabilitation counselling services (Bishop et al., 2006). RCs are well placed to work with individuals and families without prior experience of person-centred approaches to help the individual and family

navigate through the planning process across their lifespan. RCs are trained at the tertiary level to coordinate services and support the needs of people with disabilities through life stages including changing needs and support requirements. Through academic study, RCs develop knowledge of a range of disabilities and are well placed to assist individuals in the coordination of appropriate services and supports. RCs act as service coordinators in a variety of ways to link families with information, resources and services (Bishop et al., 2006). Rehabilitation Counselling research indicates that RCs should include the family early in the rehabilitation process and with the persons' consent, have the family actively participate in rehabilitation planning decisions (Bishop et al., 2006). RCs are also well placed to assess the family's emotional, psychological, and functional needs and the extent to which they are being met (Bishop et al., 2006). Given the well-established relationship between family coping and rehabilitation success, consideration of the importance of both family involvement and RCs in the planning process is recommended (Bishop et al., 2006). The functional, psychosocial and employment outcomes of injured individuals have been associated with the family's emotional and psychosocial adjustment postinjury (Bishop et al., 2006).

Specialised Supported Employment (0133):

As discussed previously, within Australian University settings, Rehabilitation Counsellors are the only Allied Health Profession who complete core tertiary training in the vocational evaluation process, particularly as it pertains to people with disabilities.

Rehabilitation Counsellors graduate with strong knowledge and skills in the following areas pertaining to employment services for people with disabilities:

- Assist clients on job search skills;
- Identify educational and training requirements for specific jobs;
- Identify and arrange training to maintain a successful job placement;
- Identify individual work personality characteristics to be observed and rate on an actual job or simulated work situation;
- Determine and apply the level of intervention necessary for job placement (ie creation of a position for an individual);
- Perform job analyses to identify physical and psychological demands and other job requirements;
- Provide workplace evaluations, including assessment of appropriate worksite accommodations;
- Identify assistive technology and worksite accommodation resources to facilitate job placement;
- Identify and utilise resources to help with placement;
- Apply supportive counselling techniques to prepare people for stress associated with jobsearch;
- Promote people with disabilities to prospective employers;

- To assist with successful and sustainable outcome and determine ongoing or changing needs prospective employers;
- Monitor persons with disabilities once in employment.

Griffith University's Master of Rehabilitation Counselling Degree currently facilitates this professional knowledge through the following courses:

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Vocational Decision Making

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RCs currently demonstrate their knowledge in this domain through their work as part of the Federal Government's National Panel of Assessors, completing supported wage assessments, ongoing support assessments and workplace assessments/modifications. RCs recognise the duality between the person and the employer is critical to success. RCs are the only professional discipline with the core academic training to provide specialised supported employment.

RCAA has identified the following services within the Professional Registration Groups as aligning with the skills, knowledge and expertise of RCs:

Support Coordination (0132):

As discussed previously, RCs are tertiary trained to provide assessments which identify support needs of people with disabilities and coordinate required services and support to assist people to build capacity and resilience. RC university training and work-integrated learning ensures RCs develop knowledge of a range of disabilities and appropriate services and interventions to assist persons with disabilities to participate in all aspects of society.

RC foundation knowledge of theories of disability makes RCs suitably qualified to work with individuals and families without prior experience of person-centred approaches and help the individual and family with effective support coordination across the lifespan.

RC knowledge is derived from courses such as the following currently situated within the Master of Rehabilitation Counselling at Griffith University:

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https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=4&profileId=97042

Person Centred Planning

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RCs are recognised by NDIA as suitably qualified to work in the role of APS 6 Advisor-Disability Management Professional, which acknowledges RCs are equipped to provide specialist disability management advice and support to NDIS Planners. RCs are employed within the NSW Lifetime Care and Support Scheme as Service Coordinators, where they utilise their academic training to provide case management and planning services for people with catastrophic injuries and complex and multi-faceted needs.

Additionally, RCs work within the Return to Work SA Serious Injury Unit, in the role of Disability Support Consultant. This role also entails assessment, case management and planning for people following catastrophic injuries. Furthermore, Western Australia's Catastrophic Injury Scheme also recognises Rehabilitation Counselling as a relevant tertiary qualification for the position of Care Services Coordinator.

RCAA has identified the following services within the Other Registration Groups that align with the skills, knowledge and expertise of RC's:

Accommodation/Tenancy Assistance (0101):

RCs are trained to provide case management and case coordination services for people with disabilities.

Current RCAA membership policies require members to have the skills to identify social, economic and environmental factors affecting a person's life and respond appropriately and effectively to the whole of life needs of persons with disabilities.

RC knowledge is derived from courses such as the following currently situated within the Master of Rehabilitation Counselling at Griffith University:

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Innovative Community Participation (0116):

RCs are highly trained to identify and facilitate community participation for people with disabilities. RCs often facilitate community engagement activities to build capacity, resilience, confidence, reduce isolation and increase social supports when working with people with disabilities. As RCs work within a case management framework often involving multiple stakeholders, they are well placed to engage with families and carers of people with disability on designing or coordinating innovative community participation. RC core competencies include a sound knowledge of services and supports and appropriate community linkages. RCs can present this knowledge to people with disability, family members and carers through individual or group presentations to increase understanding about ways to plan support services and align these with their needs. Such programs would assist to strengthen the capacity of people with disabilities, families and carers to assume greater control in evaluating self-directed/self-managed arrangements (Rees, 2013).

RC knowledge to provide this service in a professional capacity is derived from courses such as the following currently situated within the Master of Rehabilitation Counselling at Griffith University:

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- Identify transferable work skills by analysing clients' work history and functional assets and limitations;
- Generate suitable job options consistent with interests, abilities, and functional capacities, together with work environments, legislative restrictions and organisational policies;
- Match client needs, characteristics and aptitudes to job characteristics and requirements;
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- Conduct labour market analysis/research;
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- Consult with medical professionals regarding functional capacities, prognoses and treatment plans;
- Identify, access and coordinate resources for effective rehabilitation/habilitation, including selection of appropriate rehabilitation or educational services;
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RCAA supports person-centred models which involve individuals having choice over how their funding is managed (Broady, 2014). In fact, RCAA recommended the consideration of participant control of funding in employment services in a submission to Department of Social Services in 2016, demonstrating that similar models had been implemented with varying degrees of success in other schemes in Australia and internationally (RCAA, 2016).

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Specialised Supported Employment (0133):

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- Determine and apply the level of intervention necessary for job placement (ie creation of a position for an individual);
- Perform job analyses to identify physical and psychological demands and other job requirements;
- Provide workplace evaluations, including assessment of appropriate worksite accommodations;
- Identify assistive technology and worksite accommodation resources to facilitate job placement;
- Identify and utilise resources to help with placement;
- Apply supportive counselling techniques to prepare people for stress associated with jobsearch;
- Promote people with disabilities to prospective employers;

- To assist with successful and sustainable outcome and determine ongoing or changing needs prospective employers;
- Monitor persons with disabilities once in employment.

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RCAA has identified the following services within the Professional Registration Groups as aligning with the skills, knowledge and expertise of RCs:

Support Coordination (0132):

As discussed previously, RCs are tertiary trained to provide assessments which identify support needs of people with disabilities and coordinate required services and support to assist people to build capacity and resilience. RC university training and work-integrated learning ensures RCs develop knowledge of a range of disabilities and appropriate services and interventions to assist persons with disabilities to participate in all aspects of society.

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https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=1&profileId=96846

RCs are recognised by NDIA as suitably qualified to work in the role of APS 6 Advisor-Disability Management Professional, which acknowledges RCs are equipped to provide specialist disability management advice and support to NDIS Planners. RCs are employed within the NSW Lifetime Care and Support Scheme as Service Coordinators, where they utilise their academic training to provide case management and planning services for people with catastrophic injuries and complex and multi-faceted needs.

Additionally, RCs work within the Return to Work SA Serious Injury Unit, in the role of Disability Support Consultant. This role also entails assessment, case management and planning for people following catastrophic injuries. Furthermore, Western Australia's Catastrophic Injury Scheme also recognises Rehabilitation Counselling as a relevant tertiary qualification for the position of Care Services Coordinator.

RCAA has identified the following services within the Other Registration Groups that align with the skills, knowledge and expertise of RC's:

Accommodation/Tenancy Assistance (0101):

RCs are trained to provide case management and case coordination services for people with disabilities.

Current RCAA membership policies require members to have the skills to identify social, economic and environmental factors affecting a person's life and respond appropriately and effectively to the whole of life needs of persons with disabilities.

RC knowledge is derived from courses such as the following currently situated within the Master of Rehabilitation Counselling at Griffith University:

Introduction to Rehabilitation Counselling

<https://degrees.griffith.edu.au/Course/7303AHS?courseListOrigin=C0000010144&programOfOrigin=5578>

Disability: The Inclusion Project

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=4&profileId=97042

Person Centred Planning

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=1&profileId=96846

Innovative Community Participation (0116):

RCs are highly trained to identify and facilitate community participation for people with disabilities. RCs often facilitate community engagement activities to build capacity, resilience, confidence, reduce isolation and increase social supports when working with people with disabilities. As RCs work within a case management framework often involving multiple stakeholders, they are well placed to engage with families and carers of people with disability on designing or coordinating innovative community participation. RC core competencies include a sound knowledge of services and supports and appropriate community linkages. RCs can present this knowledge to people with disability, family members and carers through individual or group presentations to increase understanding about ways to plan support services and align these with their needs. Such programs would assist to strengthen the capacity of people with disabilities, families and carers to assume greater control in evaluating self-directed/self-managed arrangements (Rees, 2013).

RC knowledge to provide this service in a professional capacity is derived from courses such as the following currently situated within the Master of Rehabilitation Counselling at Griffith University:

Introduction to Rehabilitation Counselling

<https://degrees.griffith.edu.au/Course/7303AHS?courseListOrigin=C0000010144&programOfOrigin=5578>

Disability: The Inclusion Project

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=4&profileId=97042

Person Centred Planning

https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=1&profileId=96846

RCAA would also like to recommend that professional qualifications for NDIS providers be updated to include RCAA as the professional membership required for Rehabilitation Counsellors providing expanded services under NDIS. RCAA is the only rehabilitation counselling association in Australasia that is a full member of Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA).

Should you require any further information from RCAA regarding our request to have the NDIS Provider Guide to Suitability reviewed, we invite you to email us on admin@rcaa.org.au

Submission prepared by Danielle McGlone, Dr Vanette McLennan, Irene Mok, Amanda Rachow and Abbey Overland on behalf of the Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia (RCAA).

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