



Community Housing
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

September
2020

CHIA Submission

Certificate IV in Housing (Draft 2)

Certificate IV in Housing

Summary and Recommendations

CHIA is the peak body representing not -for-profit community housing organisations (CHOs) across Australia. Our 170+ members manage a \$40 billion-plus portfolio of more than 100,000 homes, housing people on low incomes, disadvantaged in accessing suitable accommodation in the private market.

The Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the second draft of the revised Housing Certificate.

Though we acknowledge the opportunity, as an organisation we remain disappointed with the level of engagement with our members, either directly or through peak representative organisations at the state and territory level. Our members employ a significant number of the individuals who will undertake this course and, understanding their business needs should have been central to the re-design of the course. The review could have benefited from the knowledge and expertise about present operational demands and future workforce requirements and also drawn on the work individual peak bodies have done on workforce issues. Furthermore, we could have assisted in facilitating feedback with students who were undertaking or had completed the course to better understand how the certificate had met their requirements and the demands of work.

While we appreciate that attempts have been made to consult the sector and to recruit individuals to the technical advisory group these efforts have been poorly targeted. Even at this late stage our organisation was not made aware of the second draft being published despite having made an earlier submission, nor directly invited to the recent briefings.

We also recognise that the review has been ongoing for some considerable time and that there is a desire to complete the process. We also accept that there are changes made in the second draft, that are sensible and should be implemented. We further acknowledge that it is too late for a proper work force skills review (i.e. one that the sector has a critical role in) to be conducted. That said in our recommendations we have looked forward to the next review and suggested how the process should be reformed. Our recommendations on changes to the second draft itself are restricted to what we believe is necessary to ensure it meets our sector's needs - essentially to have a workforce that can deliver high quality services and accommodation to the people on very low to moderate incomes.

Finally we hope that we can assist in facilitating feedback from our sector before the Certificate IV is finalised. Our proposal is to hold a session with peak organisations and a group of community housing staff with expertise in workforce needs.

Process Recommendations

Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) and its contractors should review its stakeholder engagement processes and ensure that it is fit for purpose for community services. This is a broad field and

it is insufficient to rely on one representative from a small part of the large industry. At the very minimum AISC needs to maintain a list of all relevant peak body organisations and ensure they are informed of any changes, reviews etc affecting their industry.

AISC may also wish to consider establishing a virtual group of housing experts to strengthen connections with the industry, explore linkages to other qualifications given the diverse jobs our members' staff undertake and to identify issues - as they arise - that could be tackled in the next review.

For future reviews of the certificate IV in Housing, the relevant peak bodies should be directly involved in the preparatory work including the assessment of workforce capability, stakeholder engagement and oversight of the process.

Recommended Changes to the Draft - Restricted to the Essential

Ensure that CHCDIV002 *Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) cultural safety* is included as a core unit. In the light of evidence to demonstrate that ATSI people's housing outcomes are significantly worse than the general population it is important that our workforce understand that cultural safety is not an optional extra.

Broaden the range of units included in the social housing specialisations to avoid excluding the parts of our workforce whose jobs are not focused on tenancy management.

Approve the Social Housing Skill Set to ensure the continued participation in training. We have argued unsuccessfully for a reduction in the overall number of units required to achieve Certificate IV, to avoid reduced take up. Approving a skill set will ensure that our workforce unable to commit the time and resources to the full course have an option to acquire and be accredited in the key skills.

Further Detail

CHIA is the peak body representing not for profit community housing organisations (CHOs) across Australia. The industry provides one in four of Australia's social rental properties, complementing public housing. CHOs manage a \$40 billion-plus portfolio of more than 100,000 homes, housing people on low incomes disadvantaged in accessing suitable accommodation in the private market. Our 170-plus CHO members include the largest (managing over 10,000 dwellings) to those with less than 100 homes. Our members provide a diverse range of housing for Aboriginal people, people with disabilities and the formerly homeless. In recent years allocations to community housing tenancies have predominantly been to households classified as 'priority need'.

Our industry now makes up approaching 25% of the social housing sector and with generally higher staffing ratios than public housing, probably a higher percentage of the workforce. While we cannot comment on the public sector's needs, with the high numbers that move between the two sectors - predominantly from public to community housing we are clearly concerned to ensure that public housing staff can meet the requirements of our industry too.

First the sector welcomes the review and the opportunity it - still - provides to ensure that the qualification meets the needs of the community housing industry now and going forwards. We particularly welcome that

the qualification has dropped the term 'social' from its title recognising that it should be more expansive. We also welcome adding a specialisation in homelessness as there is movement of staff between the disciplines and a need for most staff to be familiar with both services.

Second, we have not seen the set of competencies for housing staff and the assessment of future operational requirements that was used to inform the review and the proposed changes although we requested this in our first submission in December. In that submission we drew your attention to the work CHIA VIC had been doing to develop core competencies for community housing staff, drawing on work done for the public sector but reflecting the more responsive approach the sector encourages and the reality of regulatory and contractual obligations that impact on the way we deliver the business. On top of this general work force development, our sector has in place or under development industry development strategies that should in the future guide the review of qualifications. Similarly, our sector's work to improve practice in areas such as responses to DFV should be considered when reviewing relevant units.

In our first submission we expressed reservations about the extension of the course to include 18 units of competency. While reduced by one unit we remain to be convinced of its necessity, and are concerned the extension may discourage participation. Our estimates are that it will add six months to the course. You will be aware that many staff who undertake the qualification are working fulltime and a number either work for small organisations or in small local offices where cover is difficult to arrange. Some staff may be persuaded to take the diploma course instead given its higher status but of course this is not an option for everyone. If our recommendation to recognise a social housing skill set is recognised and accepted, this will go some way to mitigating the likely negative impact on participation.

In our first submission we also drew attention to the failure to acknowledge that most newly developed sub market rental housing has been 'affordable' rather than 'social' housing. While as noted earlier, the new Certificate IV is in 'Housing', affordable housing is not mentioned. To take an example from just one state - the Queensland Government's push to increase the supply of affordable housing under its Partnering for Growth with the community housing sector. We drew your attention to the fact that CHIA with CHIA NSW had completed a draft standard in affordable housing which may have been a basis on which to develop a specialisation. It is disappointing this hasn't been followed up. It should be a consideration for the next review.

We also requested that there should be an incorporation into the units of the most important legislative and compliance obligations as these impact on service delivery - for example privacy law and community housing regulation. Again, while not taken up this will need to be considered at the next review.

Having accepted that it is likely too late for some of our concerns to be incorporated into the new certificate there are three recommendations we hope can be taken on board.

Ensure that CHCDIV002 Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) cultural safety is included as a core unit. In the light of evidence to demonstrate that ATSI people's housing outcomes are significantly worse than the general population it is important that our workforce understand that cultural safety is not an optional extra.

ATSI people are over represented in both homelessness services and in social housing. It is important that all workers in both sectors have an understanding of cultural safety. The argument being put by some committee members is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not need to undertake the unit. This is a poor justification for making the unit optional, even if there was evidence that ATSI students

thought this way themselves. The experience of the Centre of Training in Social Housing is that its ATSI students (35% of the total) all undertake this unit and welcome its inclusion. We are unaware the Technical Advisory Committee has any recognised ATSI representative and thus is not in an ideal position to provide expert input on this matter.

Broaden the range of units included in the social housing specialisations to avoid excluding the parts of our workforce whose jobs are not focused on tenancy management.

The specialisation for social housing is very restricted to limited functions within community housing providers (applications, allocations and tenancy management) and therefore renders the qualification relevant to a limited range of jobs in the sector.

CTSH experience has been that they are enrolling staff from property management, community development and asset management as well as from traditional tenancy management roles. The limited compulsory units will not address the learning needs across the sector and could end up making the course less attractive. As in other qualifications there should be a range of units students can choose from to meet the three unit requirement. This should include the following on top of the three above:

1. CHCADV004 Represent the organisation in a court or tribunal
2. CHCCDE003 Work within a community development framework
3. CHCSOH017 Manage vacant properties
4. CHCSOH018 Respond to property maintenance enquiries
5. CHCSOH019 Manage head lease
6. CPPREP3105 Assist with property inspections
7. CPPREP4231 Select and appoint contractors in the property industry

Approve the Social Housing Skill Set to ensure the continued participation in training. We have argued unsuccessfully for a reduction in the overall number of units required to achieve Certificate IV, to avoid reduced take up. Approving a skill set will ensure that large parts of our workforce who are unable to commit the time and resources to the full course have an option to acquire and be accredited in the key skills.

There are a significant number of staff across the community housing industry who have completed different qualifications including other certificate IVs, diplomas and degrees who do not need to complete a full qualification to meet their gaps in knowledge and skills for social housing. In addition, there are staff who are unable to commit to a full qualification over three years but who need to demonstrate basic competence. The units identified will give them that foundation and understanding of social housing provision and could be built on at a future date where necessary. The units recommended are as follows:

1. CHCSOH021 Work with clients in the social housing system
2. CHCSOH013 Work with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
3. CHCSOH014 manage and maintain tenancy agreements and services (This unit focussed on the RTA)
4. CHCSOH024 Support sustainable tenancies
5. CHCADV004 Represent the organisation in a court or tribunal