



RCAA

Rehabilitation Counselling
Association of Australasia

21 December 2016

Submission to the National Injury Insurance Scheme Queensland regarding inclusion of Rehabilitation Counsellors in NISQ planning roles and services.

RCAA is the professional association exclusively representing the interests of tertiary qualified Rehabilitation Counsellors (RCs) in Australasia. 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 Queensland to ensure that you have an understanding of the skills and expertise of RCs and their potential for significant contribution within the National Injury Insurance Scheme Queensland.

RCAA would like to propose that Rehabilitation Counselling be added as a desirable profession for the position of Support Planner within NISQ, as well as other relevant roles. Rehabilitation Counsellors undertake academic training in the assessment and ongoing case management for people following catastrophic injuries such as acquired brain injury, spinal cord injury, amputations and burns. 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.

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.

Further to their case management and planning expertise, RCAA would like to propose that Rehabilitation Counsellors be identified as the preferred providers of the following vocational services:

Vocational Rehabilitation services including vocational assessment and counselling, host placement creation, worksite assessments, arrangement of appropriate workplace modifications, assessment of training needs, adjustment to injury counselling, and work options planning.

RCAA would like to note that 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 have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of various job placement models for people with disabilities. Again, Rehabilitation Counsellors are the only professionals trained in job placement models, such as the Individual Placement Support (IPS) model. RCs undertake specific training in the provision of counselling services to assist people with adjustment to acquired disability, and vocational counselling. Further, RCs are expertly trained to engage with employers to assist people with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.

Rehabilitation Counsellors are recognised within the NSW Lifetime Care and Support as the preferred Allied Health Professional to provide vocational rehabilitation services. The expertise of Rehabilitation Counsellors is recognised by NSW Health, who employ Rehabilitation Counsellors within the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit to provide vocational rehabilitation services, and in the Spinal Injuries Units, where Rehabilitation Counsellors provide vocational rehabilitation services to people with spinal cord injuries within three hospital inpatient settings. Likewise, a Rehabilitation Counsellor has been appointed to provide these services within the Queensland Spinal Injuries Unit, as part of the MAIC funded 'Back2Work' vocational rehabilitation program.

Based on the core knowledge and skills of Rehabilitation Counsellors, and their now widely accepted and valued contribution across numerous schemes and jurisdictions, RCAA would like Rehabilitation Counselling qualifications to be considered for inclusion as desirable or essential qualifications in relevant advertised roles within the NIIS QLD.

Should you have any queries regarding the core competencies and skills of Rehabilitation Counsellors, or would like to discuss this matter with representatives of the Board of Directors, we invite you to email us on admin@rcaa.org.au

Submission prepared by Danielle McGlone-Perrin and Dr Vanette McLennan, on behalf of the Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia (RCAA).

References

- Matthews, L.R., Buys, N., Randall, C., Biggs, H., & Hazelwood, Z. (2010). Evolution of vocational rehabilitation competencies in Australia. *International Journal of Rehabilitation Research*, 33, 124-133.
- Matthews, L. R., Buys, N., Randall, C., Marfels, B., Niehaus, M., & Bauer, J. F. (2015). A comparative study of the job tasks, functions, and knowledge domains of rehabilitation professionals providing vocational rehabilitation services in Australia and Germany. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 58(2), 80-90.