



RCAA

Rehabilitation Counselling
Association of Australasia

4 July 2017

Statement to NDIS Markets and Supports requesting inclusion of the discipline of Rehabilitation Counselling into current and future price lists.

Dear Ms Vicki Rundle,

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

RCAA requests that the Allied Health discipline of Rehabilitation Counselling be included in the price list for services provided under NDIS.

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 price list for 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 includes vocational assessment and vocational counselling, the administering of suitable vocational assessment tests for people

with disabilities, identification of appropriate training opportunities, workplace supports/adjustments, job analysis, job creation, and job placement methods, including Individual Placement and Support (IPS), labour market analysis, job search skills development and supported job search. As part of the vocational evaluation process, RCs also learn at the tertiary level how to assist adolescents with disabilities to transition into the world of work.

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 spinal injuries units, where Rehabilitation Counsellors provide vocational rehabilitation services to people with spinal cord injuries within three hospital inpatient settings. In Queensland for example, a Rehabilitation Counsellor has been appointed to provide these services within the spinal injuries unit at Princess Alexandra Hospital, as part of the Motor Accident Insurance Commission (MAIC) funded 'Back2Work' vocational rehabilitation program.

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

Rehabilitation Counsellors undertake academic training in the assessment and ongoing planning for people with disabilities, across the lifespan. RCs are well placed to assess and identify support needs, coordinate support services, and monitor the collective process through a planning process. A core element of RC tertiary training is understanding the needs of people with disabilities and identifying appropriate services and interventions to assist them participate in all aspects of society. RCs also receive training in various theories of disability including medical and social models, social role valorisation, independent living, the least restrictive alternative and self-determination.

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).

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. 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.

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 have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of a range of disabilities and of job placement models for people with disabilities. Again, Rehabilitation Counsellors are the only professionals trained in job placement models, such as the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. RCs can identify appropriate worksites, facilitate on the job training, and recommend workplace modifications/adjustments to assist people with disabilities to participate in employment. RCs are the only profession with academic training in creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities, the skills to complete worksite assessments, identify and negotiate modifications and/or adjustments required and the training to provide specialised supported employment. Further, RCs are trained to engage with employers to assist people with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.

RCs are recognised by the Department of Employment to provide supported wage assessments, ongoing support assessments and workplace assessments/modifications through the National Panel of Assessors. 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.

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 skilled at providing case management and case coordination services for people with disabilities, identifying their needs and linking them with appropriate and timely services. Through academic training, RCs develop knowledge and understanding of a range of disabilities and are well equipped to assist people with a disability with accommodation and tenancy concerns.

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).

Gap in service identified

RCAA notes there is no mention of an Assistive Technology and Equipment Registration Group for products and equipment to support people with disability to access and maintain employment. RCAA would like to recommend this service be included and RCs be listed as a mandatory profession to deliver this service.

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 the inclusion of our profession into NDIS price lists, we invite you to email us on admin@rcaa.org.au

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

References

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