

A private, multidisciplinary, interstate, rural and remote Allied Health organisation: How do they manage?

M.Johnstone^{1 2} **G.FitzGerald**² **C.Huxley**³

1 Health Workforce Queensland, GPO Box 2523, Brisbane, Qld, 4001, mjohnstone@healthworkforce.com.au

2 School of Public Health and Social Work, Faculty of Health, Queensland University of Technology, Victoria Park Rd, Kelvin Grove, 4059.

3 Queensland Health, GPO Box 48 Brisbane, Qld, 4000.

Aims and objectives

Allied Health (AH) service delivery models in rural and remote settings differ from those seen in metropolitan areas, where small populations dispersed across large areas leads to lower throughput and higher operating costs. However, there are organisations that appear to be not only surviving but thriving in this challenging environment. This project aimed to identify specific factors required to sustain organisations in the private rural and remote AH sector, through investigation of planning and management, recruitment and retention, funding and service delivery models of one private AH organisation operating in rural and remote Australia.

Methods

An exploratory case study of a private, multidisciplinary organisation operating in over 25 locations in two Australian states was undertaken. Methods comprised a desktop audit and literature review, followed by six semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling. Interview data was analysed using thematic and SWOT analyses. Data triangulation was performed using organisational documents, publically available literature, and verbal clarification from staff.

Results

SWOT analysis identified five categories affecting organisational sustainability, comprising: 1) the nature of the business, 2) staff characteristics, 3) the nature of the work itself, 4) the work setting and 5) leadership style and quality. The key model elements impacting organisational sustainability were the business model, employment model, funding sources, scope of practice, relationships and networking, management and governance, and linkages. The organisation was found to be sustainable, evidenced by service and employee growth and longevity.

Conclusions

AH organisations in rural and remote areas can build sustainability through strong administrative support, proactive leadership, wide scope of practice, accessing various funding sources, as well as flexibility in all processes, including recruitment and retention. Governments must ensure adequate funding is provided through appropriate financing mechanisms for organisations such as this to be long-term players in the sector.”