

# HumanAbility Submission

Advice on the National Suicide Prevention Strategy  
Consultation Draft

**October 2024**

## Acknowledgement of Country

HumanAbility acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to both their lands and seas.

We pay our respects to Elders – past and present.

## About HumanAbility

HumanAbility is the Jobs and Skills Council for the Care and Support Economy. One of 10 Jobs and Skills Councils established in 2023, our role is to provide leadership to address skills and workforce challenges for our industries, with a focus on the Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualified workforce.

We are responsible for ensuring the aged care, disability support, children's education and care, health, human (community) services and sport and recreation sectors are supported with skilled, adaptable and sustainable workforces to achieve positive economic and social outcomes for industry, community and individuals.

Human Ability's four key functions are:

- Workforce planning
- Training Product development
- Implementation, promotion and monitoring
- Industry stewardship

We are tripartite. Our governance structure and stakeholder engagement approach reflect government, union and industry.

## Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Advice on the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, Consultation Draft (the Advice). Our response focuses on our remit of training and workforce development across the aged care and disability support, children's education and care, health, human (community) services and sport and recreation industries. We appreciate the thorough approach taken in addressing workforce needs, and we are pleased to offer insights to strengthen the strategy, particularly in areas related to training consistency, retention, and the integration of Peer Workforce roles. We have structured our responses around the first two questions outlined in the consultation.



## Question 1: How well does the Advice on the Strategy articulate what is required for long-term change in suicide prevention?

**Strengths of the Advice:** We are pleased the advice addresses key elements essential for effective suicide prevention, particularly the focus on workforce development, peer workforce inclusion, and community training, which strengthen supports across services and the wider community. The emphasis on a cohesive national approach, consistent training standards, and culturally safe programs like "Suicide Story" highlights the importance of creating a well-prepared and accessible support network. However, there are areas we believe could be improved, and ideas worth further exploration, which we discuss below.

## Question 2: Is there anything critical to preventing suicide in Australia, that the Advice on the Strategy does not address?

### **Burnout and poor retention:**

The advice could be strengthened to better address retention challenges for those working directly in suicide prevention, as well as social service professionals who encounter suicide prevention work in their roles.

In our engagement with industry, stakeholders, have consistently raised burnout and low retention rates as issues impacting the workforce. HumanAbility suggests the Advice include organisations having targeted retention strategies, with specific turnover goals, comprehensive analysis of factors driving turnover, and tailored responses to retaining skilled staff. This is not only vital for the mental health of these workers, who need to feel valued and supported in their challenging roles, but also for clients who rely on consistent, experienced support for effective suicide prevention and continuity of care.

### **Implementation and commitment:**

Stakeholders have emphasised the critical importance of a commitment to implementation. We encourage you to include in your advice to government, the importance of the strategy's goals translating into timebound actions that lead to improvements for both the workforce and the clients they serve.

### **Peer Support Workforce:**

The Advice covers the Peer Workforce well, highlighting its importance, the need for consistency, accessible entry points, and integration into the broader workforce. It emphasises that peer support is vital in suicide prevention, providing unique insights and empathy. However, stakeholders have raised with us that the Peer Support Workforce is an area that requires further development. One stakeholder raised with us the insufficient focus on suicide –specific skills in the Certificate IV in Mental Health (Lived Experience). They raised the questions about if there is a need for a Skill Set or Certificate in Suicide Prevention. HumanAbility would be willing to consult with employers, unions, industry stakeholders further to better understand the need for

contextualised resources for existing training, and the need for training specific to suicide prevention peer work. HumanAbility is well placed to facilitate engagement with RTOs who deliver nationally recognised training qualifications related to the peer support workforce.

### **Suicide Prevention training as a standard part of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and workforce professional development:**

Stakeholders have shared some positive examples of training endorsed by peak bodies and nationally accredited, including work by Suicide Prevention Australia through its LearnLinc platform and NSW TAFE's proposed training model for a 'Suicide Safer TAFE NSW' that incorporates evaluation of their "2023 LivingWorks Suicide Prevention Training", which recommends training for TAFE staff and for high priority learners.

HumanAbility is continually engaging with stakeholders to explore and understand where there are opportunities, within our scope, to expand or complement these tiered training modules.

Courses such as those endorsed by Suicide Prevention Australia, provide training that is flexible, able to be updated quickly as new evidence emerges, and provide essential skilling for staff. At the same time, we see value in the TAFE NSW model, which ensures different levels of suicide prevention training are embedded as core components across VET qualifications.

Utilising the full range of training options, helps avoid duplication but also ensures universal, standardised training through VET, providing a consistent foundation in suicide prevention for all staff. By combining these approaches, we could build a workforce that is responsive, well-prepared, and uniformly skilled across the sector.

## **Question 5: Other points**

HumanAbility is the developer for:

- CHCCCS018 Provide suicide bereavement support
- CHCCCS003 Increase the safety of individuals at risk of suicide
- CHCSS00112 Suicide Bereavement Skill Set.

These units were last updated in 2015, alongside other training package products to align with new standards. Typically, training packages are reviewed every five years to ensure they remain contemporary. Both Units of Competency are components of the Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs (CHC43215) and Certificate IV in Mental Health (CHC43315) qualifications. HumanAbility is currently reviewing these qualifications, which will include a comprehensive sector consultation, analysis of the sector requirements and potential updates to these Units of Competency.