

*TITLE: Health Information Manager and Clinical coder workforce issues in Victoria.*

**AUTHOR/S: Sara Harrison and Jennie Shephard**

Department of Human Services, Victoria, Australia

Health Information Managers (HIMs) have skills that are in great demand in the Australian health industry. For a number of years, Victorian hospitals have reported increased difficulty attracting and recruiting health information management staff particularly to clinical coding roles.

In Victoria, the majority of clinical coders are qualified HIMs. There are some clinical coders whose training has been undertaken whilst on the job or through the HIMAA distance education program, however these coders are a minority in Victoria.

Due to a concern expressed by Victorian hospitals, the Department of Human Services Victoria, agreed to investigate perceived workforce issues by undertaking a HIM and clinical coder labour work force survey. This survey was conducted in 2008 and was widely circulated to the HIM workforce by both DHS and La Trobe University. HIMs were asked to circulate this to friends and former colleagues who were not in paid employment in Victoria at the time of the survey.

A total of 506 responses were received. A response rate was unable to be determined, as the population of HIMs in Victoria is unknown.

Findings included:

- A largely feminised workforce. Ninety-three percent of respondents were female.
- 52% of respondents were working full time and 11% were not working in health information management in Victoria.
- 20% had been working in health information management roles for more than twenty years.

Graduation rates from the La Trobe University Bachelor of Health Information Management course for previous years have been reviewed. It appears that the numbers of graduates in recent years does not match the demand for workers.

DHS is now undertaking further investigation into these workforce issues. Further activities of the project may include lobbying and working with educational institutions to establish formal training and education programs to increase the Health Information Management and clinical coder workforce in Victoria.