



# Allied Health Assistant Victorian Network

# A.H.A.V.N

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1. Bairnsdale Regional Health and 2. Monash Health

## Background

**Allied Health Assistants (AHAs)** are one of the **largest workforces** in the Australian health industry and yet have no peak association to govern or advocate for this group of trained workers.

In Victoria, the AHA scope of practice is guided by the **Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Supervision and Delegation Framework**, however roles for staff are often left open for interpretation by individual employers.

Consequently **AHA roles are extremely varied** across different sites, different organisations and even under different managers as evidenced by work presented in 2017 (Kinnaird, S and Whelan, L NAHC 2017).

Education resources are commonly developed for Allied Health Professionals. When subsequently training Allied Health Assistants in similar topics the courses are deemed not suitable due to the level at which they are pitched e.g. diagnostic applications.

**Without a state body** to advocate, opportunities for **advocacy** to participate in courses **is limited. Professional Development Demand by far exceeds supply** in this space as evidenced by Lucy Whelan's work in 2017 (Whelan, L. NAHC 2017) and extensive national benchmarking.

## Method

**The Victorian Allied Health Assistant Network will be developed by AHAs for AHAs**, and is considered to be innovative practice.

The founding members of the group **acknowledge and embrace the support** of key Allied Health Professionals and other Allied Health Assistant advocates including Annette Davis (Assistive workforce project manager DHHS), Tilly Waite (Wodonga TAFE coordinator and developer of AHA education modules) Jane O'Shanassy (Regional AHA manager and Clinical Educator) and Lucy Whelan (Monash Health AHA and Support workforce Advisor).

Tarrlita kay (G3 AHA Bairnsdale Regional Health Service) founder, Chair and facilitator of **AHAVN** circulated an expression of interest (EOI) widely across Victorian AHAs seeking interest in membership to the network and allowing the founding members to gather information about existing local networks.

It included a wide cross section of rural and metro AHAs and also captured AHAs involved in training and assessing. Over 32 expressions of interest for a State Network Body were received.

## Results

**The inaugural State-wide Allied Health Assistant meeting was held in November 2018** at the Monash Health Allied Health Assistant day. 55 registrants attended.

On the basis of several successful regional networks across Victoria, Terms of reference were discussed for a **State central AHA body of resource and connection to include:**

- Investigation of career structure development for Allied Health Assistants.
- Information sharing inclusive of disseminating information regarding professional development opportunities
- Liaison with other state bodies
- Meeting frequency
- Quorum
- Membership and requirements of members inclusive of a leadership committee and convenor
- Reporting lines
- Align with networks for Allied Health Professionals in structure and style
- Seek input from all AHAs in Victoria via multiple methods including online survey and anecdotal feedback

## Conclusions and Future steps

The success of this network will be secured by broad

**AHA input and support from AHP colleagues.**

- Investigate a potential move to a national body in the future
- Second meeting was held in March 2019.

