



# **Social Services National Industry Advisory Group Hui Minutes**

**22 July 2025**

## Minutes – Social Services National Industry Advisory Group Hui (hui topa)

<b>Date, Time and Location:</b>	22 07 2025 at 10:00-13:30, Microsoft Teams, Ahumairangi
<b>Chair:</b>	Sarah Williams, National Engagement Manager, Toitū te Waiora
<b>Advisory Group Members:</b>	Ivy Harper, Pouārahi   Chief Executive, Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu, Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency for the South Island Tuala Pesio Ah-Honi, Chief Executive, Mapu Maia Karena Brown, Lead Strategic Researcher, E Tū Liz Gourlay, Lead Advisor Social Worker Workforce Planning, Social Workers Registration Board Belinda Himiona, Chief Executive, Te Pai Ora SSP
<b>Secretariat:</b>	Tamar Anstice, National Engagement Project Coordinator, Toitū te Waiora
<b>Attendees:</b>	Sean McKinley, Chief Executive, Toitū te Waiora Cerelia Diprose, Principal Data & Insights Analyst, Toitū te Waiora
<b>Apologies:</b>	Megan Thomassen-Clarke, Reporting & Accountability Manager, National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges Inc Nathan Chong-Nee, Chief Executive, Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers Dominic Chilvers, Kaihautū, Council of Social Work Education Aotearoa New Zealand Tanya Anaha, Chief Māori Health and Equity Officer /Pou Whakahaere, Te Whatu Ora Taranaki/ Why Ora Carole Tana- Tepania, Chief Executive/Kahui Member, ME Family Services/Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association Susana Lepoamo, Workforce Manager, Te Puna Aonui Edna 'Ungatea Havea, Victoria University of Wellington, Programme Director Pasifika Pathways Mark Ormsby, Poumatua, Toitū te Waiora Amanda Kent, General Manager Strategy and Advice, Toitū te Waiora

**\*Actions for review on Page 6**

## Industry Updates- Summarised Minutes:

### Commentary:

#### **VET Reform Update & Transition to ISBs**

##### **Establishment of New Industry Skills Boards**

- The Government has confirmed the establishment of eight new ISBs, with Social Services grouped under the new Health and Community ISB.
- Members expressed concern that sector voices are largely absent from the design of ISBs, despite the original intention for the model to be industry-led.
- Attendees felt the reform process has been top-down, with limited consultation or acknowledgement of what WDCs, particularly Toitū te Waioira, have already achieved.

##### **Significant Budget Reductions**

- ISBs are expected to operate with a budget of ~\$3 million, roughly one-third of current WDC funding.
- ISBs are still expected to carry out key functions—including qualifications development, workforce insights, and skill standards, but with substantially reduced capacity, raising concerns about future innovation and sector support.

##### **Funding Mechanisms & Levy Concerns**

- New legislation gives ISBs the power to levy providers and industries.
- The requirements for levy agreements are vague, with no clear definition of who must agree, how consent is determined, or how disputes are resolved.
- Members warned this may create a funding “merry-go-round”, where government-funded NGOs are required to pay levies from the same funding intended to deliver frontline services.
- There are no clear enforcement pathways for levy collection or consequences for non-payment.

##### **Potential Charges for Quality Assurance Services**

- ISBs may charge for services such as:
  - moderation
  - programme endorsement
  - qualification development support
- These costs are likely to be passed on to learners or NGOs, risking further barriers to training access, particularly for already under-funded community organisations.

#### **Workforce Development & Qualification Access**

##### **Training Blockages and Inequity**

- Many providers are no longer offering Level 4 training due to cost pressures and reduced funding streams.

## Industry Updates- Summarised Minutes:

- Workers are increasingly stuck at Level 2 or 3, limiting their progression and the sector's ability to build core competencies needed for complex roles.
- Workforce needs are not driving training access; instead, funding availability determines who can progress, creating widening inequities.

### **Internships and Career Pathways**

- Proposed internships and supported workforce pathways (e.g., for Pacific clinicians) were declined by funders, despite strong evidence of workforce need.
- Organisations are self-funding internal upskilling, but members noted this is financially unsustainable and pushes NGOs closer to collapse.

### **Sector Restructures & Organisational Closures**

#### **Widespread Restructuring**

- Many NGOs reported ongoing restructures due to funding cuts.
- Staff are facing reduced hours, casual or unsociable work schedules, and increased turnover—especially within:
  - aged care
  - disability support
  - residential and community-based services

#### **Closure of Key Services**

- Critical programmes such as the parenting programme and Whānau Navigator initiatives are being reduced or shut down entirely.
- Some organisations are being forced to downsize from teams of five to just one staff member, severely reducing service capacity.
- Thousands of whānau are now without previously available support, raising long-term risks for community wellbeing and safety.

### **Impact on Vulnerable Communities**

#### **Loss of Trusted Relationships**

- The removal of navigator roles and community-based supports means whānau lose trusted, culturally grounded support workers.
- Members fear this will lead to:
  - reduced engagement
  - increased crisis events
  - earlier system contact
  - higher incarceration risks for some populations

## Industry Updates- Summarised Minutes:

### Equity Gaps Widening

- The hardest-hit groups include:
  - Māori
  - Pacific peoples
  - disabled communities
  - rural whānau
- Many providers are subsidising care out of their own pockets, driven by values rather than resourcing—raising concerns about burnout and long-term viability.

### Data, Research & Advocacy Needs

#### Sector Data Gaps

- Members were encouraged to share workforce and service data to strengthen future investment advice for TEC and shape qualification planning.
- Concerns were raised that reduced ISB capability will limit:
  - research
  - workforce insights
  - sector intelligence
  - evidence-based advice
- This could leave government and sector leadership less informed, with poorer alignment between qualifications and workforce need.

### Advocacy & Policy Influence

- Some attendees encouraged collective political advocacy to protect community and NGO services from further erosion.
- The upcoming Online Gambling legislation was noted, with emphasis on ensuring harm minimisation remains central.

### Qualification & Skill Standard Development

#### Health and Wellbeing Core Skill Standards Project

- Led by **Sara Goff**, the project focuses on developing core transferable skills across Levels 2–4 for health, wellbeing, and social services roles.
- Sector feedback is particularly sought on:
  - Level 4 standards
  - cultural competency expectations
  - credit structures

## Industry Updates- Summarised Minutes:

- foundational skills required across the workforce
- National consultation will run August–September 2025.

### Post-2026: Role-Specific Skill Standards

- Development of new, role-specific skill standards (e.g., FV/SV, disability support, youth work) is expected to begin under ISBs in **2026**, once new structures are embedded.

### Consent for Transition

- Members will be asked to formally consent to transfer their NIAG engagement details to the new ISBs, ensuring sector voices continue to be represented.
- A new NIAG web page has been launched to support transparency, sharing:
  - meeting resources
  - updates
  - actions
  - transition information

### Summary of Key Themes

- Workforce capability is declining due to training barriers, Level 4 access issues, and underinvestment.
- Sector restructures and programme closures are severely impacting vulnerable whānau, particularly Māori, Pacific, disabled, and rural communities.
- ISB reforms raise serious concerns regarding funding, levy mechanisms, consultation, and long-term workforce planning.
- Providers continue to uphold the system through unfunded labour and internal upskilling, which is unsustainable.
- Better data, political advocacy, and sector-led insights are urgently needed to protect social services and workforce development.
- National consultation on core skill standards will be a critical opportunity for the sector to shape the next decade of training and qualifications.

## Actions: On Hold

1.	
Reference #	20250402/01
Presenter:	Hera Williams
Commentary:	<p>Most of the group discussed the importance of cultural competency within Social Service professions and how that could be integrated into future qualifications.</p> <p>As Toitū te Waioira are currently working on creating Te Tiriti standards in CDEM and Cultural Competency/ Cultural Safety skill standards for Health and Well-being, the NIAG would like to see how these standards could be utilised for the Social Services Sector.</p>
Actions:	Hera and Mark to share draft of Cultural Competency/ Cultural Safety skill standard with the Social Services NIAG once it has been signed off by SLT.
Updated Action:	Cultural Competency Qualifications: Update deferred to next hui <b>(October 2025)</b> .

2.	
Reference #	20250402/02
Presenters:	Hera Williams
Commentary:	<p>Toitū te Waioira are currently in the consultation phase of creating Disability qualifications.</p> <p>These qualifications will stand alone rather than be a part of the Health and Wellbeing qualification suite. This update intrigued the group, and they asked if there was any possibility of reading the disability qualification.</p>
Action:	Hera and Mark to share draft of Disability qualification with the Social Services NIAG once the Qualification Development team have updated the rest of the organisation of the qualification's contents.
Updated Action:	Sexual & Family Violence Skill Standards: Two skill standards and one micro-credential are on hold due to staffing capacity. Update deferred to next hui <b>(October 2025)</b> .

3.	
Reference #	20250402/03
Presenters:	Hera Williams/ Susana Lepoamo
Commentary:	Susana updated us on her workforce analysis regarding the current workforce issues in the FV/SV sector. Her analysis has invaluable insights and data that could help guide and inform Toitū te Waiora's investment advice regarding the FV/SV sector.
Action:	Seek permission from Susana to share her mahi with Toitū te Waiora and the NIAG.
Updated Action:	Susana will update the NIAG when the workforce analysis has been released to the public. <b>(Closed)</b>



## Actions: Follow Up

1.	
Reference #	20250617/01
Presenters:	Cerelia Diprose
Commentary:	Cerelia noted inconsistent disability reporting (as low as 2%, as high as 25%) across sectors. Further investigation is needed into why some workers choose not to disclose. Possible reasons include stigma, fear of agency surveillance, and lack of clarity.
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note for Qualification Development team and future ISBs to discuss this with industry stakeholders when they convene advisory groups for qualification reviews (in case qualification content inclusions are needed).</li> <li>- Share what we know so far about the way in which it comes up in the data (disability disclosure by industry and occupation) if this is of interest to NIAG members.</li> </ul>
New Action:	Pass on as a recommendation to the ISB's in handover document.
2.	
Reference #	20250617/02
Presenters:	Cerelia Diprose
Commentary:	Karena requested data on the specific ethnic backgrounds of the 35% of workforce who are non-citizens, particularly useful for Pacific-focused workforce planning. This analysis can be done through the IDI.
Actions:	Will have have a more detailed breakdown of this data by end of October 2025, allowing time for IDI processes. <b>Update in October 2025.</b>
3.	
Reference #	20250617/03

3.	
Presenters:	Cerelia Diprose
Commentary:	Nathan requested a breakdown of data specific to social work roles. Cerelia confirmed occupation-specific filtering is possible and will provide this upon request.
Actions:	Share what we already have by end of June 2025, allowing time to tweak by occupation so that a tighter industry snapshot can be produced. <b>(October 2025)</b>

4.	
Reference #	20250617/04
Presenters:	Belinda Himiona
Commentary:	Belinda noted the next funding round for the Workforce Futures Fund opens in August. The fund supports workforce training initiatives across sectors, but has previously excluded some registered professions. Members are encouraged to apply or circulate the opportunity.
Actions:	Share Workforce Futures Fund info ahead of August round of funding to be released to the sector. <b>(Closed)</b>

**Actions: New**

1.	
Reference #	20250722/01
Presenters:	Belinda
Commentary:	Requests made for organisations to share workforce and service data to strengthen investment advice for TEC in October 2025.
Actions:	All members to continue to send through any relevant data pertaining to workforce, workload, and pay equity to help strengthen investment advice for the Social Services sector workforce to Hera when possible. <b>(September 2025)</b>