Evaluation of the Psychiatry Workforce Program

Information Bulletin

CONTEXT

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the Department) engaged Healthcare Management Advisors (HMA) to undertake an independent evaluation of the Psychiatry Workforce Program (PWP). The evaluation will include an assessment of the implementation, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the PWP.

The PWP 2021–23 was one of a suite of measures funded by the Commonwealth under the 2021–22 Budget Mental Health Workforce packages to attract, upskill, distribute, and retain key mental health professionals to address mental health workforce shortages and maldistribution. The development of the Program is informed by the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health (30 June 2020) and Towards a National Whole of Government approach to Suicide Prevention in Australia (August 2020).

The PWP aims to improve access to high-quality mental health care for all Australians, focusing on those living in rural and remote areas. This will be achieved across four objectives as follows:

- increase the psychiatrist workforce and consumer access to psychiatric care by increasing the number of training places, including in rural and remote areas across Australia
- increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander psychiatry trainees
- promote psychiatry to medical graduates through early engagement of medical students
- develop a nationally recognised postgraduate vocational qualification in Psychiatry for medical practitioners, including general practitioners (GPs) and emergency medicine specialists.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry (RANZCP) has been funded to implement the PWP over four years (2021–22 to 2025–26) through the following activities:

- encourage more medical graduates to pursue psychiatry through early engagement with medical students through RANZCP's Psychiatry Interest Forum (PIF)
- development of a rural psychiatry training pathway and network
- develop a nationally recognised postgraduate qualification in Psychiatry for medical practitioners, including GPs and emergency medicine specialists
- fund an additional 20 psychiatry training posts and 20 supervisors in the 2022 training year and 30 training posts and 30 supervisors in 2023 through the first half of 2026 to address workforce maldistribution and shortages.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The aims of the evaluation are to identify:

1. Short-term outcomes such as changes in training and workforce capacity, attitudes, and knowledge among program participants
2. Medium-term outcomes of the program
3. Lessons learned to improve future program design/implementation

The findings will be used to undertake a qualitative assessment of the program's overall success and make recommendations to inform future program implementation.

PROJECT METHOD AND TIMING

The PWP evaluation will occur over a 24-month period. HMA will take a staged approach to the evaluation, including a Situation Analysis to inform the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, an

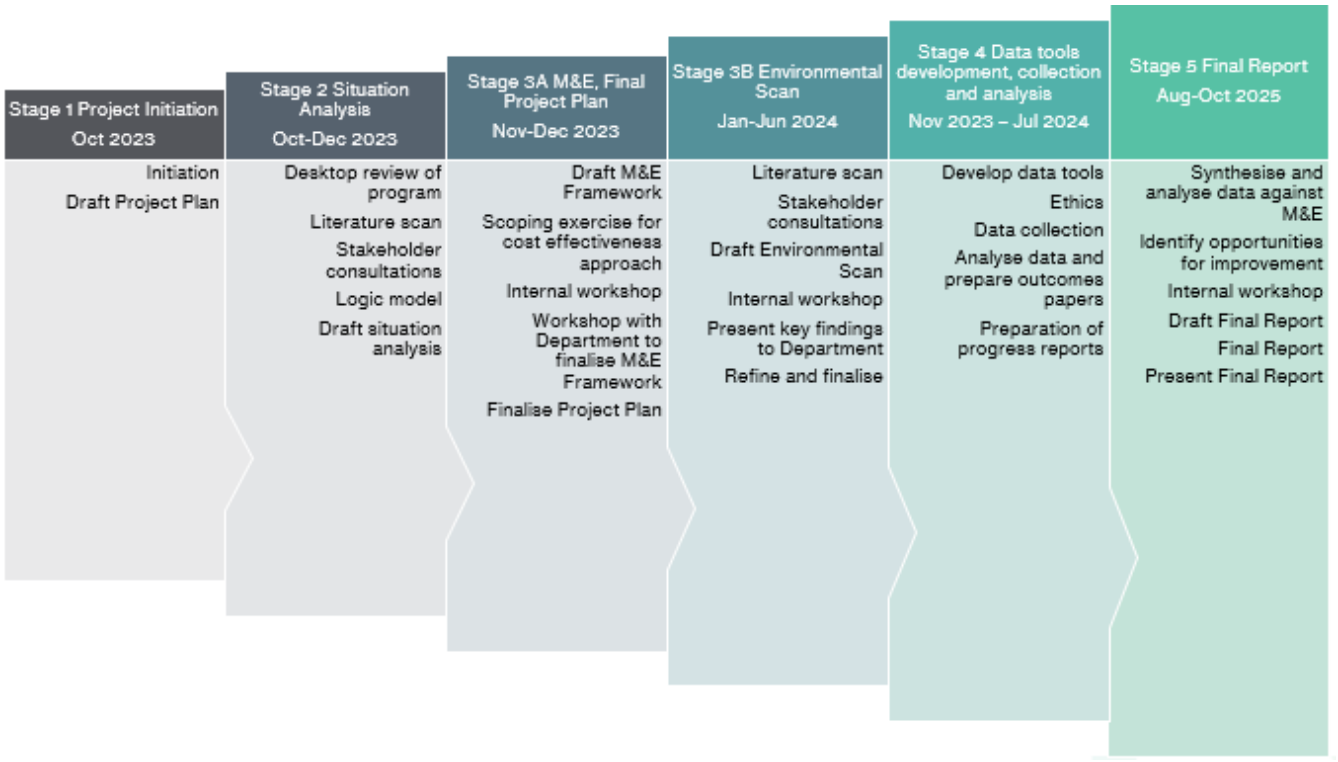
Environmental Scan to understand the broader context in which PWP sits, and extensive stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder consultation will occur in the following stages:

- Stage 2: Situation Analysis (October to November 2023)
- Stage 3B: Environmental scan (February to March 2024).
- Stage 4: Data collection and analysis (January 2024 to October 2025).

Figure 1 presents a high-level overview of the evaluation approach by stage and activities.

Figure 1: Evaluation approach



CONTACT INFORMATION

HMA

HMA Project Manager

Katrina Gray
Senior Manager, Healthcare Management Advisors

katrinagray@hma.com.au
Phone: 0405 192 438

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Attn: Psychiatry Workforce Program evaluation – msts@health.gov.au