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Real Health of the Nation 2016



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WHY REAL HEALTH?

The QUT Faculty of Health has developed a vision, to change the discussion around health issues in Australia. We want to use our position as a University for the Real World to support community partners in the not-for-profit sector, industry and government to improve health outcomes for the whole of society, not just those with a postcode and a steady income.

Earlier in 2016, Real Health Matters was launched to staff, students and Faculty partners, who have shared a commitment to technology, innovation and a more comprehensive focus on the social and economic determinants of health in Australia.

If you share our convictions I encourage you to join us. Visit the Real Health Matters website today to find out how you can work with us to make a difference to the health of the nation.

OUR PARTNERS

As part of our initiative, a pilot national survey entitled 'Real Health of the Nation' is being undertaken. The online survey went live in September 2016 and involves engagement with such leading Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) as the Salvation Army, the Wesley Mission, UnitingCare Queensland and Micah Projects.

BROADENING THINKING – HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS OF THE FUTURE

There are many health-related surveys in Australia. Few are dedicated to understanding the growing unmet needs facing the more vulnerable in society and to better understand the challenges these individuals and groups face when accessing the health system.

For our initial survey we are interested in the advocate's view of their client's journey as they experience elements of the health system from primary care to hospitalisation.

Although this pilot represents the start of our process, the data are very rich and paint a compelling image of the considerable marginalisation of many people in this country, and the difficulties managing their health and wellbeing.

KEY PROBLEMS

We are investigating the views of clients and patients as seen through the eyes of those who provide care for them. We do this by asking questions related to:

- pressures and key vulnerabilities of clients and patients.
- diversity of the health care and wellbeing needs of clients and patients.
- pressures of daily living experienced by clients and patients such as shelter / housing, food and safety.
- access to the health system.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

So far we have identified some ways in which these areas can be addressed:

- by harnessing technology and the 'virtual' digital world to improve health literacy and access to care.
- through future professional development opportunities for those who work with vulnerable populations.
- through future teaching, learning and research opportunities, QUT can contribute to effectively addressing key problems.
- by building partnerships across disciplines and sectors to advance collaboration and the sharing of effective strategies.

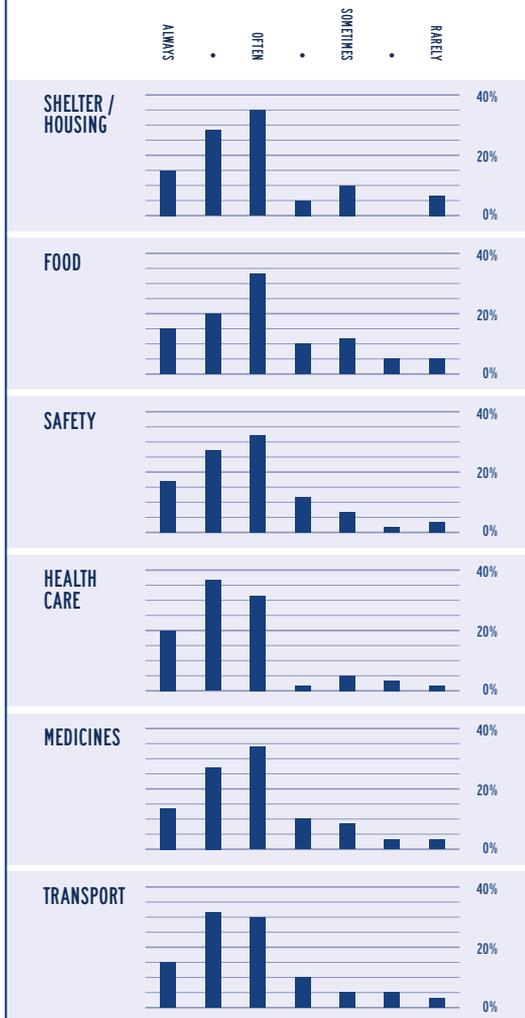
DIVERSITY OF HEALTH CARE AND WELLBEING NEEDS OF VULNERABLE CLIENTS

What we are seeing so far:

- significant needs in relation to mental illness and accessing appropriate health services to support mental health is commonly experienced.
- clients have a range of complex health and wellbeing needs, including physical, nutrition, dental, optical, hearing and medication support.
- alcohol and drug misuse, substance abuse is prominent.
- barriers include access to health services, transport and the availability of services.

PRESSURES OF DAILY LIVING EXPERIENCED BY CLIENTS

Understanding the pressures faced by vulnerable populations in their daily living helps target real solutions. Our data ranks facets of daily living and identifies where assistance is most needed to support vulnerable populations.



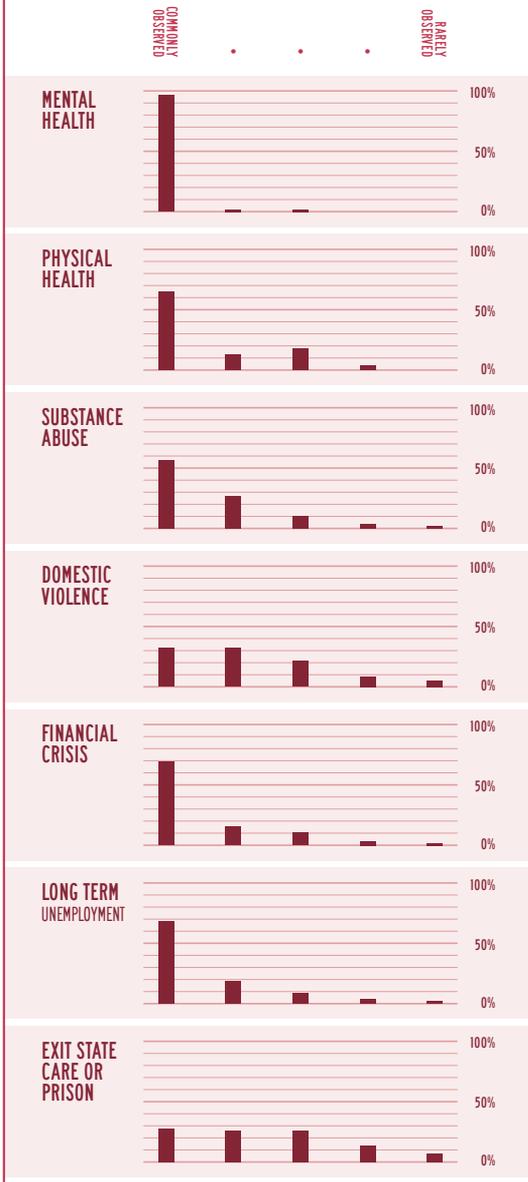
The majority (56.67%) of client groups fell into the age range of 36-64 years, with an equal gender split.

The majority (70.91%) of clients were identified as Oceanian (e.g. coming from Australia (includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders), New Zealand, Polynesia, Papua), followed by 16% of North-West European (e.g. coming from Britain and Ireland).

Based on the survey responses from 60 NGO staff.

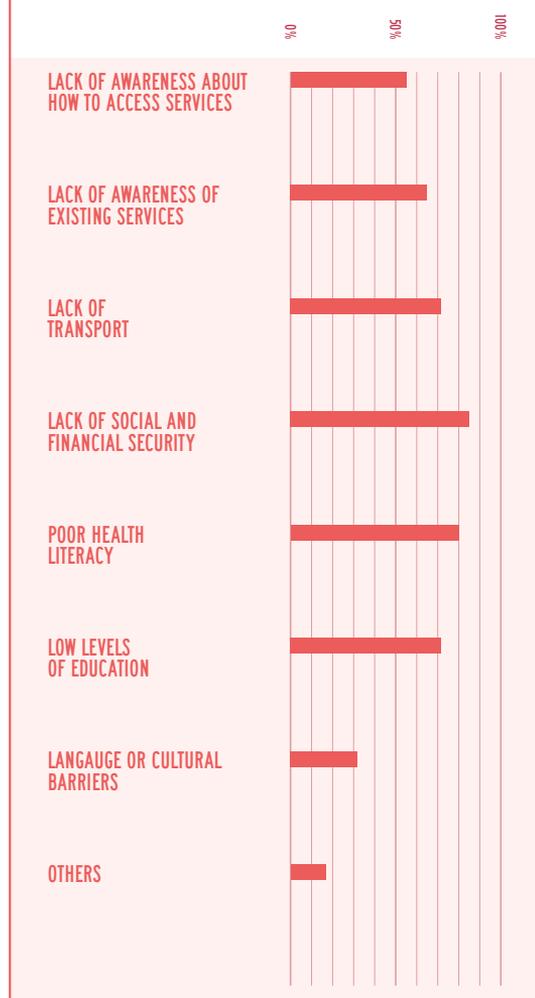
KEY VULNERABILITIES OF CLIENTS

Vulnerabilities of clients include issues such as poor mental and physical health, advancing age, substance abuse and financial crisis. In the Real Health of the Nation survey we ask respondents to rank these vulnerabilities:



ACCESS TO THE HEALTH SYSTEM

Identifying barriers for client access to health services will enable advocacy for better planning, coordination and delivery of health services.



INTERCONNECTED – SERVICES, LEARNING, PARTNERSHIPS

Our research and our conversations with our partners in the not-for-profit sector outlines one key priority – the importance of interconnected services, learning and partnership collaboration.

In the Faculty of Health at QUT we are dedicated to translating research into action and working in a collaborative ‘transdisciplinary’ manner. We do this by not only working with the not-for-profit sector and other health agencies who support vulnerable populations, and through our teaching, learning and our ongoing research.

Respondents’ suggestions to date have included advice that we provide more on-the-ground field experience so students can embrace the real life needs and situations of vulnerable clients.

Collectively, QUT Faculty of Health and its partners need to work together to overcome health system barriers and build a thorough understanding of the unique needs of vulnerable populations, especially those who are socially excluded, socio-economically disadvantaged and those with disabilities.

Our teaching and learning is aimed at lifelong growth. The Real Health of the Nation survey is identifying professional development opportunities for healthcare workers. Results show that such opportunities should include great knowledge of health system navigation and referral pathways between health services. Further professional development should focus also on improving healthcare workers’ understanding of mental health, including the early onset of mental illness, and improved assessment and intervention training.

We are asking for advice on how best to train the next generation of health professionals to tackle the issues relating to the provision of health care for vulnerable clients and patients. We are noting that communication, listening and understanding skills along with empathy and compassion, plus an ability to liaise directly and respectfully with clients, is a key priority. Secondly, there needs to be a focus on understanding the complexities of mental health, including the provision and development of stronger evidence-based approaches to care.

Finally, we are interested in how to shape the health system for the future. Overwhelmingly, the data received to date outline that improved access to health and support services for clients, including availability of services, cost and physical access such as transport, are amongst the key needs. We must develop and promote approaches that demonstrate an effective and fair return on investment.

EMERGING THEMES

To date, the Real Health of the Nation survey is showing strong trends across key themes.

Our partners' clients are experiencing significant pressures affecting daily living, most notably in their ability to access health care and in their safety, followed by challenges in finding food, and shelter / housing, obtaining transport and medicines. Commonly observed vulnerabilities paint an alarming picture including mental health problems, long-term unemployment, financial struggles and substance abuse. The most frequently experienced health care needs relate to mental health and mental illness, as well as a lack of access to support services.

Barriers to accessing health care are significant for vulnerable groups. These barriers most commonly relate to a lack of social and financial security and poor health literacy. Suggested enablers for supporting access to health care include improved availability of services, well-functioning referral systems and rigorous interventions.

THE FUTURE

Ultimately, health matters to us all. It matters in local communities, amongst those most vulnerable, in our urban areas, our rural areas and to those who are far remote. That is why we are embracing a collaborative approach to improve the real health of the nation.

Not one organisation can do this alone. To achieve this we propose four key areas of focus:

- A new networked and empowering focus on promoting health and solving health problems, including through the use of technology.
- The use of technology to enable better connections between students and practitioners across the health professions.
- The establishment of mechanisms that support dynamic advocacy and connected thinking about health issues and the deployment of resources.
- The implementation of a multi-faceted engagement strategy to raise the profile of QUT and our partners. By showcasing strengths in research, teaching, learning and engagement, we can better support health outcomes for all.

Real health matters, so what can you do to help today?

Contact realhealthmatters@qut.edu.au or visit our website www.realhealthmatters.org.au to find out more.



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