

# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER (EHO) WORKFORCE REVIEW 2004

**A study coordinated by the Environmental Health Service of the Department of Health (previously Department of Human Services) to research, analyse, develop and implement / recommend strategies to address:-**

- 1. current and anticipated shortages of suitably qualified and experienced Environmental Health Officers available to local government in SA for both permanent and temporary positions**
- 2. difficulties in attracting and retaining Environmental Health Officers in regional areas of SA**
- 3. choices, accessibility and suitability of training, education and qualifications available to Environmental Health Officers in SA**

**The review was carried out by the EHO Workforce Review Working Group between February and July 2004. Participants and the groups they represented were:-**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organisation / group represented</b>
Tina Borg	Industrial Officer	Local Government Association of SA
Frances Whittingham	Project Manager	Local Government Association of SA
Michael Livori	President	Australian Institute of Environmental Health – SA Div.
John Darzanos	Member	Australian Institute of Environmental Health – SA Div.
David Cowell	Environmental Health Officer	Regional Councils (District Council of Yorke Peninsula)
Bob Dunstone	Environmental Health Officer	Regional Councils (District Council of Grant)
Dr Nancy Cromar	Senior Lecturer & BEH Program Coordinator	Flinders University
Chris Lease	Tutor	Flinders University
Brian Delroy	Manager Food	Environmental Health Service - Dept. of Health
Mehlika Kayaalp	Manager Wastewater Mgt.	Environmental Health Service - Dept. of Health
Peter Bond	A/Manager Enviro. Surv.	Environmental Health Service - Dept. of Health
Phil Eckert	EHO – Food Section	Environmental Health Service - Dept. of Health
Viv Greaves	Manager Food Reform	Environmental Health Service - Dept. of Health

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### ABBREVIATIONS

AIEH	Australian Institute of Environmental Health – SA Division
DHS / DH	Department of Human Services ( <i>Department of Health from 1/7/04</i> )
EHA	Eastern Health Authority
EHO(s)	Environment Health Officer(s)
EHS	Environmental Health Service (a branch of the Dept. of Health)
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
LGA	Local Government Association of SA Inc.

# SUMMARY

## Introduction

The Environmental Health Service branch of the Department of Health initiated the EHO workforce review study to assist Councils in overcoming concerns expressed regarding the difficulty of filling EHO positions in SA, particularly in rural areas. The study also aims to ensure that appropriate workforce planning activities are in place to best give future surety to protecting and improving the health and well being of South Australians through the availability of services and activities that promote healthy environments and address public and environmental health risks.

Representatives from the key stakeholder groups (LGA, Councils, AIEH, and Flinders University together with the Department of Health) willingly provided their time, expertise, knowledge and effort to ensure the study covered all related issues, and recommended balanced and achievable strategies to address the issues broadly summarised as:-

- 1. current and anticipated shortages of suitably qualified and experienced Environmental Health Officers available to local government in SA for both permanent and temporary positions,**
- 2. difficulties in attracting and retaining Environmental Health Officers in regional areas of SA, and**
- 3. choices, accessibility and suitability of training, education and qualifications available to Environmental Health Officers in SA.**

The Working Group met on 6 occasions to discuss, research and analyse information, to develop a survey and review data collected from EHOs and Councils and to formulate recommendations. The breadth of issues considered under each of the above 3 headings are detailed in Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this report together with survey data analysis and indicators documented in Section 5. The recommendations formulated to address the three issues are provided in Section 1, and repeated in order of the organisation responsible for implementing them at Appendix B.

## Focal survey results

The significant indicators deduced from survey returns were:-

- Age grouping analysis and EHOs own estimate of the number of years they anticipate working indicate that 43% expect to work less than a further 5 years – resulting in an average annual replacement need of between 11 and 13 EHOs. This figure together with Council's expected additional EHO resource needs of 6 by 2005 and a further 10 by 2006 will not be met by the current supply rate of newly qualified EHOs coming through education systems.
- The EHO exit rate in regional areas over the next 5 years is expected to be 46% with many of those retiring currently providing dual services (eg. planning and building as well as health). Regional Councils in general experience the most difficulties in recruiting staff.
- There is a large and partially unsatisfied demand for short term and temporary EHO services and placements in SA Councils.
- There is support for a rethink of how to better prepare new EHOs for the workforce.

## Summary of findings

All indicators predict a workforce shortage of suitably qualified EHO in coming years which will be magnified in rural and remote areas. There is a need for strategies to be implemented to achieve a workforce supply that meets changing needs, growth in demand and that is sustainable. The strategies need to address intakes, recruitment, retention and flexibility to meet the changing needs and profile of the workforce. Councils also need to be encouraged to develop and maintain work environments and cultures where the EHO workforce is valued and supported, where they gain career satisfaction and where workplace flexibility arrangements and family friendly policies encourage high retention rates.

Regional Councils will need to apply incentives and tailor employment conditions to attract EHOs to their areas and implement innovative service delivery models to gain service coverage of geographic areas. They will need to implement strategies to address professional isolation (peer support, increased educational opportunities etc.) and programs to attract rural students to qualify as EHOs.

Because the predicted regional workforce shortages are not singularly tied to EHOs the Working Group strongly recommends co-joining with the planning and building professions to develop comprehensive plans and actions to address regional needs. This process would provide greater capacity and opportunity for more innovative solutions and would most appropriately be led and facilitated by the LGA.

Failure to increase the number of EHOs available to the market may result in them becoming more demanding and choosier about where they work so that only employers and locations of choice may end up having an adequate supply of EHOs.

Educators, the LGA, state agencies and the profession itself need to extend partnering opportunities and lead, support, participate or facilitate, as appropriate, educational and professional development and continuous (life long) learning opportunities for EHOs. Strategies need to be jointly developed to improve the job readiness of newly qualified graduates entering the local government workforce.

In all there are many opportunities to make improvements and change the otherwise problematic outlook for the future of environmental health services and regulation in SA. Many suggestions have been made through the recommendations detailed within this report. The success or otherwise of those suggestions rests with the commitment of stakeholders to play their part in making a difference to the availability and quality of future environmental health services within SA.

# 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

***(NOTE: A table of recommendations in order of the organisation / parties anticipated to lead / implement the recommendations is also provided as Appendix B)***

**A. Recommended strategies to address current and anticipated shortages of suitably qualified and experienced Environmental Health Officers available to local government in SA for both permanent and temporary positions.**

***(Refer also to Section 2 of the Report for more detailed explanation related to these strategies and recommendations)***

1. That the Department of Health and the LGA approach Flinders University to examine strategies for increasing numbers of Environmental Health graduates.
2. That the Department of Health and the LGA lobby the Flinders University to develop a bridging program for graduates from related disciplines to gain an approved Environmental Health qualification which will allow them to practice as Environmental Health Officers. *(refer also recommendation 19)*
3. That University of Western Sydney (Hawkesbury ) be advised of the expected shortfall between numbers of Environmental Health Officers available and the estimated need within SA over coming years – provides ideal timing for marketing their distance course to potential students through various conduits including the AIEH and the LGA.
4. That the LGA include details of external education options within career information posted on their web site. *(refer also recommendation 7)*
5. That as the LGA considers the applicability of the national skilled migrant program that the option to identify EHOs as one of the target groups be considered.
6. That the LGA prepare a marketing strategy focused on promoting working in local government as a career choice. EHOs to be included as one of the roles therein. (The target audience of the strategy to be high school students and suggested media to include video, DVD and CD Rom.)
7. That a “careers in local government” section be developed and added to the LGA web site to help promote and explain career opportunities in local government. EHOs to be included as one the careers detailed therein. *(refer also recommendation 4)*
8. That the LGA consider seeking additional opportunities, such as attending university open days and career expos, to promote career opportunities in local government.
9. That the LGA & AIEH develop systems and processes to collect, record and manage listings of qualified EHOs (the LGA site may include other professional services such as planning & building) available for temporary employment on the LGA / AIEH web sites. That the “temporary employment options” web pages be marketed to recently retired EHOs, non-working EHOs and EHOs generally to build up the data base of persons available. That the “temporary employment options” pages be recommended to Councils as a readily available source of information of EHOs available for temporary assignment in SA.
10. That Councils be encouraged to implement family friendly and flexible workplace policies and practices, such as part time and job share arrangements, to better meet the changing needs and profile of the EHO workforce and to maximise future recruitment and retention rates.
11. That the Department of Health implement a review of the Public & Environmental Health Act and work with the LGA to more clearly define the role and extent of environmental health services within local government including the requirement for Councils to address environmental health management within their strategic management planning process, or alternatively develop an Environmental Health Management Plan that links to the Council strategic plan.

**B. Recommended strategies to address difficulties in attracting and retaining Environmental Health Officers in regional areas of SA**

***(Refer also to Section 3 of the Report for more detailed explanation related to these strategies and recommendations)***

12. That regional EHO Groups be requested to make a practice of allocating one of their members to proactively support and mentor new EHOs commencing duties in single EHO Councils within their regions.

13. That the Environmental Health Service (EHS) offer a meet and greet program to new EHOs to familiarise them with roles and contacts within EHS.
14. That Regional Councils ensure sufficient training \$ allocations and support are provided for EHOs to participate in training and networking opportunities.
15. That Regional Councils consider offering benefits like salary packaging, extra leave, rostered days off, flexi-time, rental subsidies, study leave, relocation cost reimbursement, permanency of positions and private use of vehicles to improve the attractiveness of the job and also to consider such actions as committing back-up and support via temporary staffing when EHOs take leave or have heavy workloads to deal with.
16. That the LGA lead a research project to analyse costs, benefits, practicalities and implications of a range of models for delivery of professional services (covering EHOs, Planning and Building Officers) to regional Councils and Council groupings in SA. The models investigated to include regionalised central service delivery, sharing positions between Councils, on-selling services to other Councils and services via contractor. Also that the LGA form a group with representatives from regional Councils, the AIEH, Planning Institute of Australia, Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, Department of Health, Planning SA, Environmental Protection Authority and other appropriate bodies (eg. Regional Development Boards) to participate in the project.
17. That local EHOs proactively and positively market the role of EHOs within their communities - for example by attending high school career nights and partaking in high school work placement programs. That the AIEH coordinate a project to develop a Power Point resource or similar to assist EHOs present at careers nights and alike. That the AIEH investigate the opportunity to produce a SA or national video resource to attract people to an EHO career.
18. That Regional Councils be encouraged to maximise their reach by advertising widely (eg. interstate) when seeking EHOs. (It was also noted that regional Councils should proactively consider traineeships as an option to increase the likelihood of attracting EHOs to their areas – *refer recommendation 23*)

**C. Recommended strategies to address choices, accessibility and suitability of training, education and qualifications available to Environmental Health Officers in SA**  
*(Refer also to Section 4 of the Report for more detailed explanation related to these strategies and recommendations)*

19. That the LGA and the Department of Health lobby Flinders Uni to implement their proposal to develop a 2 stream post graduate course (1) for existing Environmental Health qualified persons wishing to upgrade their qualifications and skills and (2) a bridging degree. (*refer also recommendation 2*)
20. That Flinders University Department of Environmental Health's offer to reinstate their Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) be supported. That the first task of the committee be to consider ways to include more practical skills input to the existing program, including a review of the existing practical placement component. That invited representatives of the LGA, AIEH, DH and EPA be encouraged to accept invitations to become involved in the PAC.
21. That the PAC examine aspects of the Bachelor of Environmental Health curricula with the aim of developing opportunities for participation and contributions from practising EHOs (particularly in areas such as the introduction to environmental health, public health law and public health engineering).
22. That the LGA lead discussions regarding the options and benefits of introducing a step or program (eg. traineeships) in between completion of the Bachelor of Environment Health course and placement of EHOs in local Councils (may also be applicable for other professions – eg. planning & building).
23. That where practical Councils be encouraged to provide traineeship/cadetship opportunities to 3<sup>rd</sup> year Environmental Health students, similar to the model followed by Salisbury and Marion Councils.
24. That the AIEH liaise with Flinders University to identify guest facilitators for a range of workshops and field trips covering practical issues identified as requiring more emphasis in the current curriculum.
25. That Councils and EHS be encouraged to proactively offer study trips of relevant sites to assist Environmental Health students learning and understanding of environmental health issues.
26. That the AIEH prepare a professional information package for presentation to first year students of the Bachelor of Environment Health course. That the LGA provide assistance and support to

- the AIEH to develop the presentation. The presentation to include the benefits of working in local government.
27. That the AIEH be requested to change the timing of their 3 day annual conference to better suit students studying the Bachelor of Environmental Health degree. That the AIEH invite Flinders Uni to participate via presentation of papers to the conference.
  28. That Flinders University broaden the work placement program run in the second year of the Bachelor of Environmental Health course to include state government as well as private sector partners (not just local government) to help students pursue their areas of interest.
  29. That the LGA, in conjunction with professional bodies, consider developing a recommended practice to Councils regarding an expected level of annual training hours / \$ budgets for EHOs and other professional staff with the aim of encouraging Councils to set aside appropriate and equitable training budgets.
  30. That the AIEH pre-plan their annual training programs well in advance and provide approximate programs and costing information to EHOs at an appropriate time to enable them to seek training budget allocations from their Councils.
  31. That the AIEH proposal to tie training to a continual professional development (CPD) scheme be encouraged and supported. That the AIEH consider allocating CPD points to those actively involved in providing training to others (eg. include those providing training in the employment setting such as the work placement program).
  32. That regional EHO groups be encouraged to partner with agencies (eg. LGA, AIEH SIGs, Department of Health, EPA etc.) to bring speakers, training and educational opportunities to regional areas and to look for technological options (virtual learning platforms and processes) that offer opportunities to increase access to training and align with needs.
  33. That the AIEH prepare a case and apply to the LGA and the Department of Health for a budget allocation to assist the professional body provide training and development opportunities to students and officers in the Environmental Health sector.

## 2. CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED SHORTAGES OF EHOs

The Working Group analysed the generally held view that a good number of EHOs were nearing retirement age and there was concern that the numbers qualifying may not meet the demand for replacement of retirees and workload increases into the future. The following actions were taken:-

- 2.1 Two surveys (refer section 5 & Appendix A of the report) were developed to collect a range of information including statistical data regarding future EHO employment trends anticipated by Councils and EHOs. Thanks go to the LGA for administering and hosting the electronic surveys on their web site. Flinders University analysed the past trends of numbers of students completing the Bachelor of Environmental Health course and collected data regarding students participating in alternative external educational studies.

The anticipated supply against needs were compared.

EHO SUPPLY	Source / basis of information	No's p.a.
Numbers qualifying via Flinders Uni	Statistics provided by Flinders – 143 graduated in past 10 years (100 females & 43 males). 16 in 2001, 11 in 2002, 14 in 2003, up to 20 anticipated for 2004. Estimated average numbers for future years = 18	18
Number of SA students completing distance study	Currently 8 SA students are at various stages of the 6 year part time course at Hawkesbury college NSW = 1 to 2 completing the course each year	+ 1
Less % that go on to further study, alternative occupations, interstate or overseas etc.	Figures based on analysis of 104 out of the 143 students graduating over the last 10 years. 12% have gone on to further study, 3% to alternative occupations, 5% interstate and 7% overseas = loss rate average of 27% or 4 to 5 graduates p.a.	- 4
Less % of newly qualified students that choose to work in state government or other industry	Analysis of past trends (as above) 11% have gone to state government, 2% to federal government, 1% defence = loss rate average of 14% or 2 to 3 graduates p.a.	- 3
<b>Average number of EHOs expected to be available to local government p.a.</b> <i>(approximately 59% (11) of Flinders graduates + 1 from external study)</i>		<b>12</b>
EHOs NEEDED	Source / basis of information	No's p.a.
Anticipated retirees p.a.	Statistics provided via the EHO survey indicate that 19% (approx. 26, or 13 p.a. average) of EHOs plan to leave the service within the next 2 years and a further 24% (approx. 33, or 11 p.a. average) in the 3 years following.	2005 13 2006 13 2007 11 2008 11 2009 11
Anticipated increase to numbers due to additional workloads expected	* <sup>1</sup> Statistics provided via the Council survey indicate a need for an additional 6 EHOs within 1 year and a further 10 EHOs within 2 years. (Councils were not required to provide indicators beyond 2 years - longer term estimates would likely lack accuracy)	2005 6 2006 10 2007+ ?
<b>Number of EHOs expected to be needed by local government p.a.</b>		<b>2005 19 2006 23 2007+ ?</b>
<b>THE GAPS</b>		<b>2005 7 2006 11 2007+ ?</b>

\*<sup>1</sup> the increase of EHO workforce numbers relates to demographic and community expectation change together with anticipated new / extended increased workloads for Council EHOs around environmental protection, septic tank approvals and food auditing.

*The indicators show that there will be a significant shortfall of EHO numbers available in coming years. A range of options to assist filling those gaps were explored and are detailed in the following clauses.*

2.2 Options to increase participation rates and places available in the Bachelor of Environmental Health, or bridging courses were examined (including part-time study) with the view that extending those choices provides an avenue to increase the numbers of qualified EHOs available to the market.

- **Flinders University** advised that enrolments are based on a University funding formula and a quota system and the University aimed to maintain a higher entry score to ensure that graduate quality is maintained. The number of students entering the course is limited by external factors such as the ability to provide placement positions, and as such has been expected to remain around current levels. Students can choose to complete the Bachelor of Environmental Health course part time (but not by distance) through Flinders.

<b>Statistics for Flinders BEH</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>Est. 04</b>
Gender breakdown of students completed 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year BEH				
• Male	4	4	5	
• Female	12	7	9	
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Approx. 18</b>
Origin of students completing 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year BEH				
• Mature Age	5	4	3	
• School Leaver	11	7	11	
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Approx. 18</b>

Over the past 10 years the ratio of females to males completing the BEH degree has been 100:43 indicating the feminisation of the EHO workforce.

The survey results indicate that all metropolitan and 28 regional Councils are prepared to offer work placement programs for EHOs so this is unlikely to be a limiting factor for future intakes for Flinders.

The Working Group supported Flinders desire to maintain student 'quality' through high entry scores and considered that increased marketing of the course could help to entice a larger number of high quality students to the course – refer to 2.5 for marketing recommendation.

*Recommend that the Department of Health and the LGA approach Flinders University to examine strategies for increasing numbers of Environmental Health graduates.*

*Recommend that the Department of Health and the LGA lobby the Flinders University to develop a bridging program for graduates from related disciplines to gain an approved Environmental Health qualification which will allow them to practice as Environmental Health Officers. (refer also clause 4.1)*

- **University of Western Sydney (Hawkesbury)** offers the Bachelor of Applied Science (Env. Health) externally. Students study by correspondence and are required to spend a 1 week block in Hawkesbury each year. The Working Group questioned the possibility of Flinders Uni offering the annual contact hours in SA to help make the distance course more attractive. Flinders University advised that this arrangement is very unlikely as there is no current mechanism to undertake such co-operation and the financial incentives for either institution to do so are virtually nil. Given the financial realities the Working Group considered that it was unlikely that additional external education options would become available in the near future. It was noted that external education readily suits part time study by mature age students or those undertaking traineeships with Councils – these options should be encouraged as a further means of increasing the availability of qualified EHOs in coming years.

*Recommend That the University of Western Sydney (Hawkesbury ) be advised of the expected shortfall between numbers of Environmental Health Officers available and the estimated need within SA over coming years – provides ideal timing for marketing their distance course to potential students through various conduits including the AIEH, the LGA.*

*That the LGA include details of external education options within career information posted on their web site (refer also clause 2.5).*

2.3 Consideration was given to whether EHO resources could/should be increased by setting up a technical stream with lower or alternative qualifications (eg. TAFE course).

*The Working Group believed that the current 'norm' of fully qualified EHOs (a) helped maintain professionalism of the role, (b) that the full job role met the needs and flexibility required by Councils, (c) improved EHO job satisfaction and (d) there was unlikely to be a market demand for para qualifications – no further action was taken on this option. It was noted that administrative type support assisted EHOs to meet work load demands.*

- 2.4 The prospect of the skilled migration or other State/Commonwealth initiatives providing further means to increase the number of qualified EHOs available were discussed.

Recommend that these types of opportunities are best pursued by the LGA as and when they became available.

- 2.5 Means of raising the profile and attracting more interest in Environmental Health were considered.

Recommend that

- *the LGA prepare a marketing strategy focused on promoting working in local government as a career choice - EHOs to be included as one of the roles therein. (The target audience of the strategy to be high school students and suggested media to include video, DVD and CD Rom.)*
- *the LGA consider seeking additional opportunities, such as attending university open days and career expos, to promote career opportunities in local government.*
- *That a "careers in local government" section be developed and added to the LGA web site to help promote and explain career opportunities in local government. EHOs to be included as one the careers detailed therein.*

- 2.6 Options to meet fluctuating, short-term and temporary EHO needs were analysed. The survey results showed that 19 Councils (12 regional & 7 metro) have been **unsuccessful** in filling short-term EHO positions in recent times – some system is needed to assist Councils meet this need. The large number of EHOs likely to leave the service in the near future (with some interested in filling short-term contracts) together with the feminisation of the industry (and associated need for family friendly practices) and survey results indicating that 28 Councils expect to need to fill temporary EHO positions of between 1 and 6 months over the coming 2 years support the notion of implementing systems to facilitate filling of short-term vacancies. The survey results providing the lengthy time Councils take to fill vacant EHO positions is also a good indicator of the likelihood of Councils needing short-term EHO in-fills. The prediction of significant EHO number shortfalls overall means that part time and short term positions may need to be considered as an option to help fill the gaps, particularly in the coming 2 / 3 years whilst other strategies implemented to increase EHO numbers take effect.

Recommend

- *That the LGA & AIEH develop systems and processes to collect, record and manage listings of qualified EHOs (the LGA site may include other professional services such as planning & building) available for temporary employment on the LGA / AIEH web sites. That the "temporary employment options" web pages be marketed to recently retired EHOs, non-working EHOs and EHOs generally to build up the data base of persons available. That the "temporary employment options" pages be recommended to Councils as a readily available source of information of EHOs available for temporary assignment in SA.*
- *That Councils be encouraged to implement family friendly and flexible workplace policies and practices, such as part time and job share arrangements, to better meet the changing needs and profile of the EHO workforce and to maximise future recruitment and retention rates.*

- 2.7 Means of achieving greater consistency of the breadth of environmental health services delivered between Councils was considered as part of predicting future EHO numbers.

Recommend

- *That the Department of Health implement a review of the Public & Environmental Health Act and work with the LGA to more clearly define the role and extent of environmental health services within local government including the requirement for Councils to address environmental health management within their strategic management planning process, or alternatively develop an Environmental Health Management Plan that links to the Council strategic plan.*

### 3. ATTRACTING AND RETAINING EHOs IN REGIONAL SA

The Council survey indicated that 17 regional Councils have previously been able to fill vacant EHO positions with suitably experienced and qualified applicants, 15 were unable to do so, 13 have not recently had any need, with the remaining 3 Councils providing no comment. Regional Councils identified 'location' as the most common reason for not being able to fill positions, closely aligned with the general lack of number of EHOs available to the market.

Survey feedback indicated that regional EHO roles generally involved more diversity in the makeup of the position and noted that regional Councils often provided emergency support assistance and infill to neighbouring Councils.

The Working Group analysed the underlying issues that regional Councils have in attracting and retaining EHOs to their areas, and considered actions and strategies that may help make the regional areas more attractive to EHOs. (It was noted that EHOs were just one of the professional roles where position filling was a problem to regional Councils, planners and building officers were in a similar situation, as are other professional health personnel shortages such as Doctors.)

- 3.1 Professional and personal isolation of EHOs in regional areas was identified as an issue. Nearly one quarter of regional EHOs stated that they were **not** generally able to attend appropriate training courses and conferences due to a variety of reasons including non support by employer, cost and inability to free up time. Means of overcoming this problem were discussed and the following ideas identified.

Recommend that:-

- regional EHO Groups be requested to make a practice of allocating one of their members to proactively support and mentor new EHOs commencing duties in single EHO Councils.
- the Environmental Health Service (EHS) offer a meet and greet program to new EHOs to familiarise them with roles and contacts within EHS.
- regional Councils be encouraged to ensure sufficient training \$ allocations and support is provided for EHOs to participate in training and networking opportunities.

- 3.2 Means to make the positions in regional areas more attractive encompassing conditions and financial rewards were examined. The EHO survey shows that 54% of regional EHOs have full or partial use of a council vehicle. It was noted that regional EHOs are generally classified one level higher than their metropolitan counterparts, however salaries continue to be market driven and this should be left for individual Councils to deal with as suits their circumstance.

*Recommend Regional Councils consider offering benefits like salary packaging, extra leave, rostered days off, flexi-time, rental subsidies, study leave, relocation cost reimbursement, permanency of positions and private use of vehicles to improve the attractiveness of the job, and also to consider such actions as committing back-up and support via temporary staffing when EHOs take leave or have heavy workloads to deal with.*

- 3.3 Alternative service delivery models to deliver EHO services (ie. regional subsidiaries similar to the Eastern Health Authority, resource sharing etc.) were considered as a means of overcoming some of the inherent problems related to single/shared EHO sites and as a way of attracting EHOs and making best use of specialised services. Regional Councils currently employ a variety of means of providing EHO services - 32 employ EHOs, 7 share EHOs, 6 purchase EHO time from another Council and 3 from private contractors. 9 regional Councils have indicated an interest in investigating alternative service delivery models with the main focus being on increased resource sharing with a number suggesting centralised regional service delivery models covering combined environmental health, building and planning services. Regional interest in alternative service delivery models is likely to grow as country EHO retirement rates increase.

Other research confirms that both building and planning specialties in local government are in short supply and that the difficulty of filling these positions in regional Councils is similar to EHO positions – there is therefore much logic in tackling this issue on a three-fold front with the LGA as the authority to facilitate this process. This project may well be suitable for an application to the LGA Research and Development Fund.

*Recommend that the LGA lead a research project to analyse costs, benefits, practicalities and implications of a range of models for delivery of professional services (covering EHOs, Planning and Building Officers) to regional Councils and Council groupings in SA. The models investigated to include regionalised central service delivery, sharing positions between Councils, on-selling services to other Councils and services via contractor. Also that the LGA form a group with representatives from regional Councils, the AIEH, Planning Institute of Australia, Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, Department of Health, Planning SA, Environmental Protection Authority and other appropriate bodies (eg. Regional Development Boards) to participate in the project.*

- 3.4 The means of raising the profile of local EHOs as a way to attract country students to qualify as EHOs (on the assumption that they may return to work in country SA) were considered.

*Recommend that local EHOs proactively and positively market the role of EHOs within their communities eg. participate in local high school career nights, partake in high school work placement programs etc. That the AIEH coordinate a project to develop a Power Point resource or similar to assist EHOs present at careers nights and alike. That the AIEH investigate the opportunity to produce a SA or national video resource to attract people to an EHO career – similar to the WA video.*

*(The recommendation at section 2.5 for the LGA to develop a marketing strategy would also assist this purpose.)*

- 3.5 Thought was given to how regional Councils could reach a wider market to find EHOs.

*Recommend that regional Councils be encouraged to maximise their reach by advertising widely (eg. interstate) when seeking EHOs.*

*It was also noted that regional Councils should proactively consider traineeships as an option to increase the likelihood of attracting EHOs to their areas – (refer also section 4.3)*

- 3.6 Discussion took place regarding the pros and cons of implementing exchange programs and secondments between agencies as a means of developing and supporting regional EHOs. Although the Working Group believed the notion is good, the practicalities and cost implications are in reality not workable unless there is a strong commitment from both parties for this to occur, thus no recommendation is provided on this matter.

## 4. CHOICES, ACCESSIBILITY AND SUITABILITY OF TRAINING, EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS AVAILABLE TO EHOs IN SA.

The Working Group defined their views on the responsibility of various stakeholders in regard to the training and development of EHOs as follows:-

LGA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring training is done in particular fields (Aim - to encourage Councils to set aside appropriate training budgets)</li> <li>• Facilitator, supporter and encourager of training</li> <li>• Role in communicating regarding training opportunities</li> <li>• Delivery of staff development type training (eg. conflict resolution)</li> </ul>
AIEH (including Special Interest Groups – SIGs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying training needs</li> <li>• Delivering specific training on a cost recovery basis - including via other training suppliers and contractors</li> <li>• Delivering annual conference (provides information, networking opportunities, training and mentoring)</li> <li>• Providing access to national conference</li> <li>• Liaison between state, national and local governments</li> <li>• Provide opportunity to participate in AIEH – to network and develop skills and knowledge</li> </ul>
Regional EHO Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extending training options by organising and participating in regional training activities – partner with agencies to bring speakers, training &amp; educational opportunities to regional areas. Look for technological options to increase accessibility to training.</li> </ul>
Flinders Uni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of Bachelor of Environmental Health Course</li> <li>• To offer post graduate studies including a bridging program (under consideration)</li> <li>• Delivery of National Short Courses in Environmental Health (focus on risk assessment)</li> </ul>
Department of Health - EHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for new policy and legislation (eg. wastewater, cooling towers, food etc.)</li> <li>• Refresher training tied to legislation (Food &amp; Environmental Health Act)</li> </ul>
EPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for new policy and legislation (eg. noise, air, water)</li> <li>• Refresher training tied to legislation (Environmental Protection Act)</li> </ul>
Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising the importance and providing an appropriate budget and support for equitable training for professional staff</li> <li>• Seeking appropriate training opportunities to meet EHOs needs</li> <li>• Working with other Councils to share costs and resources to increase training delivery</li> <li>• Working with Flinders to provide opportunities for increased practicum content and practical skills training for Bachelor of Environmental Health students</li> </ul>
EHOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure they continuously develop themselves professionally and keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date</li> </ul>

It was acknowledged that the environmental health field is becoming increasingly complex with a requirement to tackle multiple issues across many disciplines encompassing biological and chemical science, microbiology, sociology, epidemiology, food technology, health promotion, prevention of communicable diseases and general public health principles together with a growing demand in environmental management and protection. Qualifications and training are needed to suitably skill and equip EHOs amid these changing requirements, enabling them to provide a broadening professional service to their communities.

Members knowledge and experience together with survey data and feedback enabled the Working Group to establish a list of issues connected to the qualification, education and training of EHOs. The issues and possible strategies to address them follow.

- 4.1 EHOs interest in post graduate qualifications were discussed. Flinders Uni advised that the development of a post graduate qualification is anticipated to begin mid 2004 and will take around 2 - 5 years to implement. It is proposed that the post graduate qualification will consist of two masters course offerings (1) for existing Environmental Health qualified persons wishing to upgrade their qualifications and skills in the emerging discipline of health risk assessment and management, and (2) a bridging degree for qualifying as an EHO from another degree - refer also clause 2.2.

*Recommend that the LGA and the Department of Health lobby Flinders Uni to implement their proposal to develop a 2 stream post graduate course (1) for existing Environmental Health qualified persons wishing to upgrade their qualifications and skills and (2) a bridging degree – refer also clause 2.2.*

- 4.2 The need to increase the number of persons obtaining EHO qualifications to meet future local government needs is well evidenced by survey data.

*Refer to section 2.2 of the report for recommendations covering this need.*

- 4.3 Council and EHO feedback (27 and 77 comments respectively) indicated that newly qualified students often commenced work with a lack of skill and experience, and a limited perception of the type of field work that was required of them in the EHO role. Ways of improving this situation were discussed.

Flinders Uni suggested that the reinstatement and revitalisation of their Professional Advisory Committee could provide a focus group to review this aspect of the program. They also noted the opportunity to incorporate 'practically relevant' materials within the structure of a University undergraduate program was limited and recommended that the profession should consider options for cadetships or junior positions to allow specific skills training at the beginning of an EHO career path.

The Working Group was very supportive of increased student participation in practical learning situations and field visits to live situations covered within their studies – eg. visit to working cooling towers, swimming pools, food manufacture, waste systems etc.

The cadet EHO program run by the City of Salisbury was seen as a good model to up-skill pending graduates whilst providing return value to the Council. Criteria includes the 3<sup>rd</sup> year student cadet working approximately half time (1 to 2 days per week during term time up to full time during semester breaks), and a preference for the cadet to undertake their final year project within the Council area. Councils participating in cadet schemes need to be located within travelling distance for students, and be able to provide supervision/ leadership, a labour budget, and office accommodation and resources.

Recommend that:-

- *Flinders University Department of Environmental Health's offer to reinstate their Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) be supported. That the first task of the committee be to consider ways to include more practical skills input to the existing program, including a review of the existing practical placement component. That invited representatives of the LGA, AIEH, Department of Health and EPA be encouraged to accept invitations to become involved in the PAC.*
- *the PAC examine aspects of the Bachelor of Environmental Health curricula with the aim of developing opportunities for participation and contributions from practising EHOs (particularly in areas such as the introduction to environmental health, public health law and public health engineering).*
- *the LGA lead discussions regarding the options and benefits of introducing a step or program (eg. traineeships) in between completion of the Bachelor of Environment Health course and placement of EHOs in local Councils (may also be applicable for other professions – eg. planning & building).*
- *where practical Councils be encouraged to provide traineeship/cadetship opportunities to 3<sup>rd</sup> year Environmental Health students, similar to the model followed by Salisbury and Marion Councils.*
- *the AIEH liaise with Flinders University to identify guest facilitators for a range of workshops and field trips covering practical issues identified as requiring more emphasis in the current curriculum.*
- *Councils & EHS be encouraged to proactively offer study trips of relevant sites to assist EH students learning and understanding of environmental health issues.*
- *the AIEH prepare a professional information package for presentation to first year students of the Bachelor of Environment Health course. That the LGA provide assistance and support to the AIEH to develop the presentation. The presentation to include the benefits of working in local government.*

- *the AIEH be requested to change the timing of their 3 day annual conference to better suit students studying the Bachelor of Environmental Health degree. That the AIEH invite Flinders Uni to participate via presentation of papers to the conference.*

4.4 Feedback identified that there was opportunity to make improvements to the Flinders University work placement program scheduled during year 2 of the course. (The current program involves students spending one day per week during semester one, then 2 x 1 week block during semester two with a local Council.) It was noted that Flinders University have recently developed a very comprehensive package including CD-ROM for Councils offering work placements, and run biannual workshops to assist Councils understand the requirements and expectations of the work placement program.

Recommend that:-

- *Flinders University broaden the work placement program run in the second year of the Bachelor of Environmental Health course to include state government as well as private sector partners (not just local government) to help students pursue their areas of interest.*

4.5 Options to increase the opportunity and participation of EHOs in continuous training and professional development were examined.

Recommend that:-

- *the LGA, in conjunction with professional bodies, consider developing a recommended practice to Councils regarding an expected level of annual training hours / \$ budgets for EHOs and other professional staff with the aim of encouraging Councils to set aside appropriate and equitable training budgets.*
- *the AIEH pre-plan their annual training programs well in advance and provide approximate programs and costing information to EHOs at an appropriate time to enable them to seek training budget allocations from their Councils.*
- *the AIEH proposal to tie training to a continual professional development (CPD) scheme be encouraged and supported. That the AIEH consider allocating CPD points to those actively involved in providing training to others (eg. include those providing training in the employment setting such as the work placement program).*
- *regional EHO groups be encouraged to partner with agencies (eg. LGA, AIEH SIGs, Department of Health, EPA etc.) to bring speakers, training and educational opportunities to regional areas and to look for technological options (virtual learning platforms and processes) that offer opportunities to increase access to training and align with needs.*
- *the AIEH prepare a case and apply to the LGA and the Department of Health for a budget allocation to assist the professional body provide training and development opportunities to students and officers in the Environmental Health sector.*

## 5. SURVEY RESULTS - ANALYSIS, & INDICATORS

### EHO SURVEY RESULTS

**109 or 77% of EHOs (based on an all up total of 141 EHOs) in SA replied to the survey.**

**Regional Councils**

39 or 80% of a possible 49 EHOs based in regional Councils completed the survey.  
EHOs covering 36 (75%) out of a possible 48 regional Councils participated.

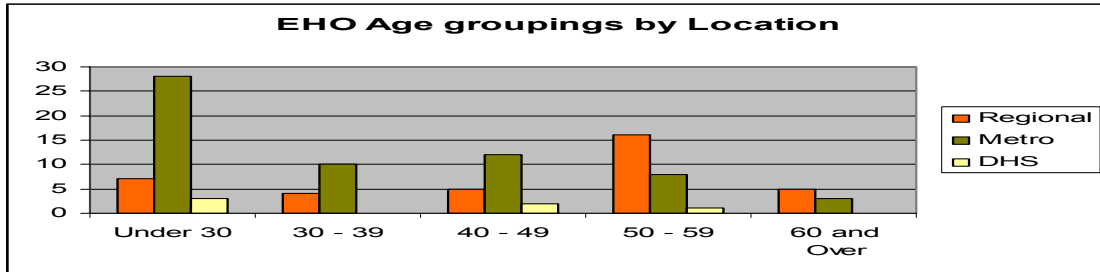
**Metropolitan Councils**

63 or 68% of a possible 92 EHOs based in metropolitan Councils completed the survey.  
EHOs from each of the 20 metropolitan Councils participated.

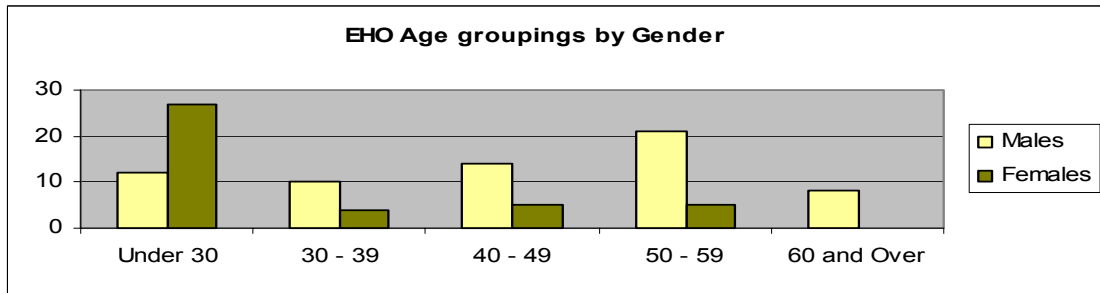
**Department of Health**

6 (86%) of a possible 7 EHOs based in DHS completed the survey

Age groupings (refer to Question 4 of the EHO survey form)



In regional areas the % of over 40 years of age is 71%, over 50 years of age 58% and over 60 years of age 13%.



49% of EHOs (43 males and 10 females) completing the survey are aged over 40 and 32% (29 males and 5 females) are aged over 50. The significant change to the ratio of females compared to males qualifying as EHOs within the last 8 years is also readily shown by this graph.

*These statistics indicate that there are likely to be a significant numbers of EHOs retiring within the next 10 years with a particularly high loss of numbers and experience from regional Councils within that timeframe. This indicator is supported by results of EHOs estimates of the number of years they anticipate working as an EHO. The statistics also indicate that there is now a predominance of females entering the field.*

Gender (Q 5)

59% of EHOs completing the survey are male and 41% female.

In regional areas the % of males is 77% & females 23%, whilst in metropolitan Councils the % is 48% males & 52% females.

*These statistics indicate that female EHOs tend not to be appointed to regional Councils. Factors that may impact this indicator are that females may have selected not to apply for regional Councils; and a high proportion of female EHOs have only qualified within the last 8 years while many of the regional positions have not been called within that time frame.*

#### Nature of employment (Q 6)

83% of EHOs are in permanent positions, 2% casual, 10% in contracts under 3 years duration and 5% in contracts exceeding 3 years. The balance between regional and metro is reasonably consistent.

*The statistics indicate that permanency is by far the most popular form of employment of EHOs.*

#### Type of employment (Q 7)

92% of EHOs work full time and 8% (6 male and 3 female) part time. The balance between regional and metro is reasonably consistent.

*The statistics indicate that full time is by far the most common form of employment of EHOs.*

*The high number of expected retirees together with the trend of an increasing percentage of female EHOs in the system (and the associated likelihood of mixing part time work with family duties) may provide a potential need to increase part time and even contract positions to help meet future EHO shortages.*

#### When qualifications were completed and course suppliers (Q 8 & 9)

24% of EHOs have completed their qualifications since 2000, 40% during the 90's and 36% pre 1990. 54% of current EHOs are University qualified (48% at Flinders and 6% at other unis), 39% qualified under the 'old' TAFE course and 7% via distance study.

5 out of the 6 EHOs who gained their qualifications from universities other than Flinders, and 4 out of 7 EHOs who completed their study by distance education, are based in regional Councils.

*These statistics tend to indicate that regional EHOs are more likely than their metro counterparts to have studied by distance education or to have attained their qualifications in a different state or country.*

#### First employer (Q 10 & 11)

The first employer of 83% of EHOs was local government, 12% state government and 5% other. The balance between regional and metro was reasonably even.

#### Number of years of experience as an EHO (Q 12)

23% of EHOs have 0 to 2 years experience (15 of these were females and 10 males), 17% 3-5 years, 17% 6-10 years and 43% (6 females and 42 males) more than 10 years. The figures show that regional EHO have either spent very little or very considerable time as an EHO, whereas the spread in metro areas is relatively even.

*These statistics show that nearly one quarter of EHOs have commenced their role within the last 2 years which indicates that new graduates have filled many of the vacancies over that time and adds to the statistic that 57% of EHOs have less than 10 years experience.*

#### Did your education/qualifications suitably prepare you for work in the field as an EHO? (Q 13)

71% of responding EHOs thought their studies suitably prepared them for their field work whilst 29% did not think so (many of the later group were from the under 30 years age group); the balance between regional and metro was reasonably even. This result would at first appear at odds with the large number of comments received regarding skill and experience shortfalls of recently qualified EHOs, however this survey question was to all EHOs about their own transition from education to work (many of whom qualified a good number of years ago) whilst the general comments were focused singularly on recently qualified EHOs.

#### Provide comments on ways to improve student preparation for work in the field (Q 14)

Ten consolidated pages of comments were received from EHOs regarding education, qualification and training. All comments were reviewed and considered by the Working Group in conjunction with the preparation of this report. The comments also provided valuable feedback for Flinders University. A summary is provided below:-

- 77 comments were received related to the need to increase hands-on field work experience within the Bachelor of Environmental Health course structure with many recommending variations to the work placement program.
- 24 comments were received regarding cadetship, traineeships and graduate programs with most suggesting increasing the availability of these "extension" programs.
- 6 comments suggesting the need for an honours degree or other higher studies.
- 5 comments received noting that students needed a better understanding of the EHO role.

- 12 comments received suggesting Flinders increase the use of experienced professionals as lecturers / speakers for the EH degree.
- 68 comments were provided regarding the Flinders course contents and training needs.
- 7 comments were received regarding external studies and part time courses
- 14 comments were received regarding training courses generally.

#### Number of years with current employer (Q 15)

43% of EHOs have worked with their current employer for 0-2 years, 24% 3-5 years, 15% 6-10 years, and 18% more than 10 years. A high proportion of the 0-2 years would be new first time employees. The balance between regional and metro is reasonably even except that the % of EHOs working with their current employer for less than 2 years is 49% compared to 39% in metro areas.

*These statistics indicate that EHOs are fairly mobile between employers with 67% working less than 5 years with their current employer which is probably reflective of the general mobility of today's workforce.*

#### EHO Classification levels (Q 16)

22% of EHOs are paid at MOA 4 or lower, 45% are paid at MOA 5 and 33% are paid at higher levels. MOA level 5 is by far the most predominant level in metro areas whilst level 6 is the most common in regional areas. Only 20% of metro EHOs are classified at MOA 6 or above, compared to 57% in regional areas.

*These statistics indicate that regional Councils more regularly pay a higher level classification possibly to attract / retain their EHOs or because they require wider experience due to the diversity of regional positions.*

#### EHO salary ranges (Q 17)

47% regional and 46% metro EHOs earn less than \$50,000. 6% regional and 11% metro EHOs earn more than \$60,000.

*These statistics tend to indicate that regional MOA classification EB levels may be lower than metro because the higher classification levels in regional areas (shown in above section) are not matched by a consistent % in higher salary levels; however this may be influenced by the 5 no responses to the salary level question in regional areas or may be lost in the \$10,000 gap range used in the questionnaire.*

#### Full or partial private use of a Council vehicle (Q 18)

54% of regional EHOs have full or partial private use of a council vehicle compared to 31% in metropolitan areas.

*This statistic indicates that regional Councils regularly provide private use of vehicles as part of their EHO attraction / retention strategy and to meet the greater travel needs in regional areas.*

#### Hold roles other than as an EHO and in what field (Q 19 to 21)

54% of regional EHOs hold multiple roles compared to 30% in metro areas. 75% of the regional EHOs who hold multiple roles are in the over 50 year age grouping.

In regional areas 3 EHOs provide building services, 4 development assessment, 4 environmental management and 11 other services including general complaints, OH&S, Works, STEDS, management, general inspection, landfill etc.

In metro areas 1 EHO provides building services, 4 environmental management and 15 other services including waste, OHS, immunisation, management, administration, strategic etc.

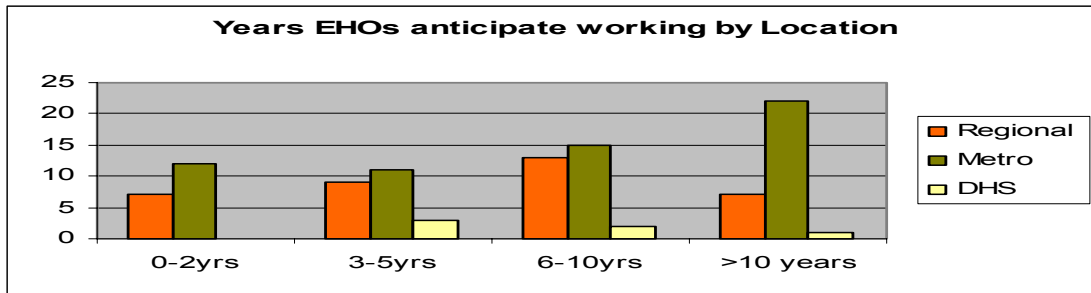
*The statistics indicate that regional Councils who have tended to retain many of the dual qualified "multi purpose" EHO are likely to face some difficulty in replacing additional types of specialised skills when their EHOs, many of whom are in the older age groups, leave their service.*

#### % of EHO work time spent in different categories (Q 22 to 25)

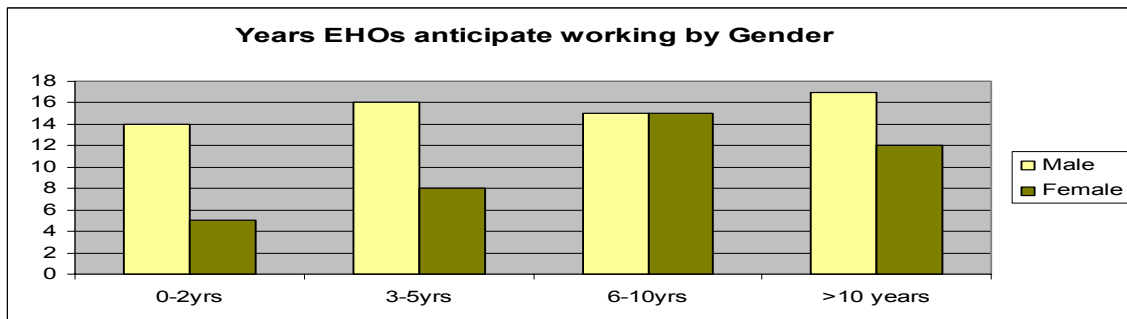
EHOs estimate that they spend 38% of their time dealing with food, 35% public health, 9% development applications and 18% other. The balance between regional and metro is relatively even, except that regional EHOs spend 19% of their time dealing with development applications compared to metro EHOs 3% of their time – most metro Councils have Planning departments who do most of this work.

*These statistics indicate that regional EHOs are required to have more input into development application assessments than their metro counterparts.*

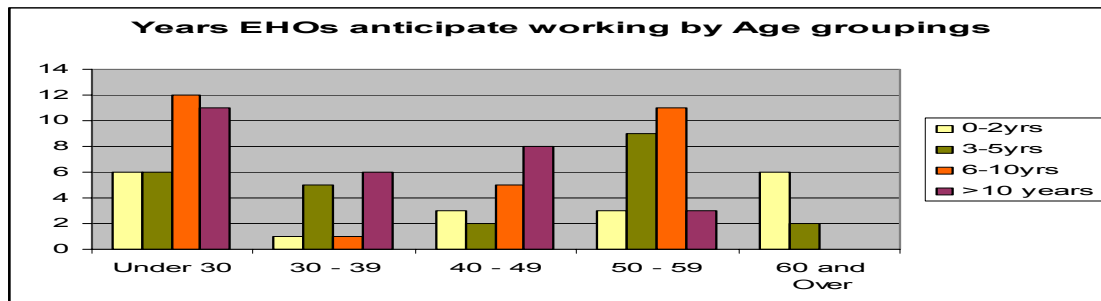
Estimate of number of years you anticipate continuing to work as an EHO (Q 26)



In regional areas 19% of EHOs expect to work between 0-2 yrs, 27% 3-5 yrs, 35% 6-10 yrs and 19% over 10 yrs. (46% regional EHOs expect to work less than a further 5 years)  
 In metro areas 20% of EHOs expect to work between 0-2 yrs, 19% 3-5 yrs, 25% 6-10 yrs and 36% over 10 yrs. (39% metro EHOs expect to work less than a further 5 years)



43% (30 males and 13 females) of responding EHOs anticipate working less than a further 5 years as an EHO. The high proportion of males anticipating leaving reflects the profile of larger percentages of male EHOs in the higher age groupings, however 13 female EHOs also intend to leave the service within the next 5 years despite only 5 female EHOs being over the age of 50.



The concerning data shown in this graph is that 34% of the under 30 year age group estimate they will work as an EHO for less than 5 years; of these 6 (2 males and 4 females) expect to work less than 2 years and a further 6 (2 males and 4 females) less than 5 years. The higher proportion of females reflects the pattern of gender in the younger age groups and the increased exit rates may reflect the increased likelihood of female employees leaving the service for family reasons.

*These statistics indicate that there is a proportionally high percentage of EHOs that are intending ceasing employment as an EHO in the near future; 19% within 2 years and a **further** 24% within 5 years. The statistics also indicate that a relatively high percentage of young EHOs do not intend to stay working in this role (alternative working arrangements may be needed to attract EHOs back to the role after maternity or other leave) and that regional Councils will have a magnified shortfall of EHOs over the coming 5 years.*

Ability to attend training courses and if not why not (Q 27 to 29)

85% of EHOs (76% regional and 89% metro) are generally able to attend appropriate training courses. The main reasons for not being able to attend training are given as cost, lack of support from employer and inability to afford the time to train.

*These statistics indicate that regional Councils may need to make some extra efforts to ensure a higher proportion of their EHOs are able to attend appropriate training courses.*

Do they want to qualify as a food safety Auditor (Q 30)

85 % of yes or no replies indicate an interest in training as a Food Safety Auditor whilst 10 of the total 109 responding EHOs have not decided either way at this stage. It would appear that more EHOs are interested in training as a food safety auditor than is matched by Councils intending on providing that service at this stage, however it is early days given that auditing requirements won't apply until at least mid 2005.

Other comments (Q 31)

Three and a half consolidated pages of general comments were received from EHOs. The Working Group examined all feedback provided as part of the development of strategies and recommendations. In summary the comments were as follows:-

- 4 comments suggesting development of mentoring programs for new graduates
- 4 comments noting concerns with long term career paths for EHOs
- 4 comments regarding part-time, job sharing and the need to fill casual positions
- 13 comments recommending raising the profile and promoting the EHO role
- 2 comments around pay rates
- 2 comments suggesting exchange programs
- 3 comments concerning job security with contract positions
- 2 comments suggesting DHS should monitor Councils performance more extensively
- 2 comments suggesting revamps of the EH course structure and focus
- 22 other comments covering a wide range of topics

## COUNCIL SURVEY RESULTS

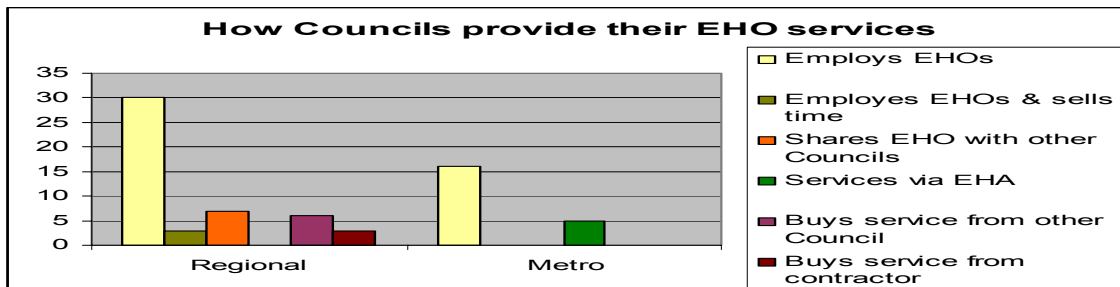
68 Councils and the Eastern Health Authority (EHA) or 100% of possible participants replied to the survey. The survey was directed to the Chief Executive Officer of Council.

There are 48 regional Councils (71% of the total number of Councils)

There are 20 Councils (29% of the total number of Councils) plus EHA (serving 5 of those Councils) within the metropolitan area – 21 metropolitan ‘groups’ in all or 16 metropolitan groups employing EHOs.

Question 2 to 5 and 17 to 21 only were required to be answered by Councils employing EHA to provide their environmental health services. All other Councils were requested to complete all questions.

How EHO services are supplied (refer to Question 2 & 3 of the Council survey form)



55 or 80% of all Councils (including EHA) employ their own EHOs to provide their environmental health services, with 10 of those Councils on-selling or sharing some of their EHO time to other Councils. 5 Councils buy their services from EHA, 3 from a private contractor and 6 buy EHO time from other Councils. Volume of work enables metropolitan Councils to employ multiple EHOs directly or via EHA.

*The statistics indicate that regional Councils find they need to employ a range of means to meet environmental health service requirements with a good number selecting to share or on-sell services with neighbouring Councils to make it more affordable to provide specialised services.*

Interest in changing service delivery model (Q 4 & 5)

9 regional Councils (3 from the southeast) and 1 metro Council are interested in investigating alternative ways of providing environmental health services. The changes suggested are mostly around increasing resource sharing options with 3 Councils considering cadetships or additional EHOs and one looking to on-sell services.

*The statistics indicate regional Council interest in increasing resource sharing service delivery models. This interest is likely to grow as country EHO retirement rates increase.*

Current FTE numbers compared to what they estimate in 12 mths. time and in 2 years time (Q 6 to 8)

	Regional	Metro	Total
Current full time equivalent (FTE) EHOs	40.04	72.95	112.99
<b>Increase anticipated during next 12 months</b>	<b>1.52</b>	<b>5.50</b>	<b>7.02</b>
FTEs anticipated in 12 months time	41.56	78.45	120.01
<b>Increase anticipated during following 12 months</b>	<b>4.80</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>8.80</b>
FTEs anticipated in 24 months time	46.36	82.45	128.81
<b>Total extra EHOs needed during next 2 years</b>	<b>6.32</b>	<b>9.50</b>	<b>15.82</b>

*The statistics show an expected growth of 14% of EHO numbers within 2 years. This adds further pressure to local governments' ability to source EHOs given the high numbers expecting to exit the service.*

Need to fill EHO positions, difficulties experienced and time taken (Q 9 to 12)

27 Councils have been able to fill vacant and new EHO positions with suitably qualified and skilled EHOs. 20 Councils had not been able to; 15 of these were in regional Councils predominantly located a significant distance from Adelaide. 11 of the 20 Councils not easily able to fill EHO positions considered location to be the main disincentive with the remaining factors including lack of qualified/experienced EHOs available and market forces forcing up salary and conditions.

9 regional Councils and 1 metro Council have taken 3 to 6 months to fill EHO positions and a further 4 regional Councils have taken more than 6 months to fill a position.

*The statistics indicate that regional Councils in particular experience difficulty in attracting suitably qualified / experienced EHOs and often have long periods of time, often with no infill EHO, before appointments can be made.*

Need for temporary / short term EHO services & estimates for next 2 years (Q 13 & 14)

22 Councils have been able to find temporary or short term EHOs when they have needed them and 19 Councils have not been so lucky.

13 Councils anticipate needing temporary EHOs for up to 2 months over the next 2 years, 9 Councils expect 2-6 months work, and 6 more than 6 months work. 22 Councils anticipate no need.

*The statistics indicate that there is large need anticipated for temporary or short term EHO services in both the regional and metropolitan areas over the coming 2 years.*

Will Councils offer work placement programs for EHO students (Q 15)

All metropolitan and 28 regional Councils are happy to offer work placement programs for EHO students. 13 regional Councils are not able to offer work placement programs mainly because they do not have full time EHOs to support the students (the listing will be provided to Flinders University).

Skill and knowledge gaps of new EHOs (Q 16)

27 comments were received on this topic. These were reviewed by the Working Group.

*The comments indicate that some means need to be found to improve newly qualified EHOs understanding, skills and capacity to perform the EHO role when commencing duties with Councils.*

Number of Councils that charge fees (Q 17)

All except 1 metropolitan Council charge fees for general food business inspections as do 19 regional Councils (27 regional Councils choose not to charge fees).

Number of Councils anticipating supplying auditing services for Food Safety Programs (FSPs) (Q 18)

31 Councils (19 regional and 12 metro) anticipate providing auditing services when FSPs become mandatory, 13 (all regional) do not expect to provide this service and 25 Councils have yet to decide.

*These statistics indicate that there is likely to be some future work load increases for EHOs tied with FSP auditing. Auditing services will also provide associated income generation opportunities.*

Number of Councils anticipating taking on a broader role from an environmental protection focus in the future and how that work will be done (Q 19 & 20)

30 Councils (20 regional and 10 metro) anticipate taking on broader environmental protection roles in the future, 17 (11 regional and 6 metro) do not expect to and 22 Councils have yet to decide. Of the Councils anticipating taking on the broader role 20 expect the extra work involved will be allocated mainly to their EHOs.

*These statistics indicate that there is likely to be some future work load increases for EHOs associated with the broadening focus of environmental protection issues.*

Other comments (Q 21)

All comments were reviewed by the Working Group to ensure that all relevant issues were addressed.

- 10 Councils added additional comments regarding the environmental protection focus question with a good number of them stating their concern that local government was expected to take on a variety of additional work without matching funding from state government.
- 16 comments were provided regarding attracting and filling EHO positions. A number commented that the difficulty of filling positions in regional areas was similar to other professional health personal shortages (ie. Doctors) and other professions (planners, building officers, engineers etc.).
- Several comments noted that regional Councils looked after each other such as providing EHO services for neighbouring Councils with urgent needs.
- Several Councils noted that changing legislation, local population changes, expected food business inspection frequencies and similar will result in increased EHO workloads.
- One Council suggested that officers from State agencies (eg. EPA) could be seconded for short periods of time to carry out appropriate work/projects.

**APPENDIX A**

**SURVEY FORMS AND RAW DATA COLLATED**

**EHO survey questionnaire and results**

\*\* Percentages calculated on the total completing individual questions excluding the no responses, don't know & not applicable answers

No.	Question	Choices	Regio nal	Metro	Dept. Health	Total	***%
	<b>Total replies to EHO survey received</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>109</b>	
4	Age grouping	Under 30	7	27	3	37	35%
		30-39	4	11		15	14%
		40-49	5	12	2	19	18%
		50-59	17	8	1	26	25%
		60 and over	5	3		8	8%
		No response	1	3		4	-
5	Gender	Male	30	31	4	65	60%
		Female	9	33	2	44	40%
6	Nature of employment	permanent	31	54	6	91	83%
		casual	1	1		2	2%
		contract (term 0 to 3 years)	4	7		11	10%
		contract (term over 3 years)	3	2		5	5%
7	Type of employment	fulltime	36	58	6	100	92%
		part time	3	6		9	8%
		ad hoc				0	-
8	Year EHO qualifications were completed	2000-2004	8	16	2	26	24%
		1990-1999	10	30	2	42	40%
		pre 1990	19	17	2	38	36%
		No response	2	1		3	-
9	Course supplier for qualifications	Flinders Uni	12	35	3	50	48%
		Other Uni	5	1		6	6%
		TAFE	15	23	2	40	39%
		Distance study ( Hawkesbury)	4	2	1	7	7%
		Not applicable/no response	3	3		6	-
10	Who was your first employer as an EHO?	Local Government	35	53	2	90	83%
		State Government	3	7	3	13	12%
		Private industry				0	0%
11		Other <i>specify</i>		4	1	5	5%
		No response	1			1	-
12	Number of years experience you have as an EHO	0-2 years	9	14	2	25	23%
		3-5 years	2	15	1	18	17%
		6-10 years	5	12	1	18	17%
		more than 10 years	23	23	2	48	43%
13	Did your education / qualifications suitably prepare you for work in the field as an EHO	YES	26	47	2	75	71%
		NO	10	16	4	30	29%
		Not applicable/no response	3	1		4	-
14	Provide comment on ways to improve student preparation for work in the field		Various	Various	Various	Various	
15	Number of years working with your current employer	0-2 years	19	25	3	47	43%
		3-5 years	9	16	1	26	24%
		6-10 years	5	11		16	15%
		more than 10 years	6	12	2	20	18%
16	What is your current classification	MOA 1				0	0%
		MOA 2		1		1	1%
		MOA 3	3	9		12	13%
		MOA 4	4	3		7	8%
		MOA 5	8	36		44	45%
		MOA 6	10	4		14	15%
		MOA 7	3	2		5	5%
		MOA 8	1	5		6	6%
		MOA Senior Officer	6	1		7	7%
		Don't know /no response	4	3		7	-
		Not Applicable			6	6	-
17	Your current salary range (do no include value of car use or superannuation)	Under \$40,000 p.a.	4	6	1	11	11%
		\$40,001 to \$50,000 p.a.	12	22	3	37	36%
		\$50,000 to \$60,000 p.a.	16	26	2	44	44%
		Over \$60,000 p.a.	2	7		9	9%
		No responses	5	3		8	-

No.	Question	Choices	Regional	Metro	Dept. Health	Total	***%	
18	Do you have full or partial <u>private use</u> of a Council vehicle	YES	20	19		39	36%	
		NO	17	43	6	68	64%	
		No response	2	2		2	-	
19	Do you hold roles other than as an EHO as part of your current employment?	YES	21	18		39	37%	
		NO	18	43	6	67	63%	
		No response		3		3	-	
20 21	If "YES" to 19 above what are the other roles?	Building	3	1		4	10%	
		Planning/Dev. Assessment	4			4	10%	
		Environmental management	4	4		8	19%	
		Other ( <i>specify</i> )	11	15		26	61%	
		No response	16	43	6	65	-	
22	Divide the % of your EHO work time spent into the following categories:-	Food	10.12	25.25	3.55	38.92	38%	
23		Public Health	12.12	22.83	1.05	36.00	35%	
24		Development applications	6.93	1.67	.25	8.85	9%	
25		Other	7.83	10.25	.15	18.23	18%	
<i>(totals shown in employee numbers)</i>			<b>Total completing question</b>	<b>37 total</b>	<b>60 total</b>	<b>5 total</b>	<b>102total</b>	
26	Estimate the number of years you anticipate continuing to work in EHO related services	0-2 years	7	12		19	19%	
		3-5 years	10	11	3	24	24%	
		6-10 years	13	15	2	30	29%	
		more than 10	7	21	1	29	28%	
		No response	2	5		7	-	
27	Are you generally able to attend appropriate training courses, conferences etc. as and when they are available?	YES	29	54	6	89	85%	
		NO	9	7		16	15%	
		Don't know	1	3		4	-	
28	If "NO" to above why not?	cost is prohibitive	2	4		6	31%	
		can not afford the time away	1			1	5%	
		not supported by employer	3	1		4	21%	
		not interested				0	0%	
		suitable training not available	1			1	5%	
29		other ( <i>specify</i> )	2	5		7	38%	
30	Are you interested in attending a 3 to 5 day training course to "qualify" as a Food Safety Auditor?	YES	32	47	5	84	85%	
		NO	5	10		15	15%	
		Don't know	2	7	1	10	-	
31	Please detail any ideas you have to improve the availability of, qualifications and training of EHOs in SA, improvements to the student work placement program, or any other comments that would contribute to this study.		Various	Various	Various	Various		

### Council survey questionnaire and results

\*\* Percentages calculated on the total completing individual questions excluding the no responses, don't know & not applicable answers

No.	Question	Choices	Regional	Metro	Total	***%
<b>Total replies to Council survey received</b>			<b>No.</b>		<b>No.</b>	
2	How does your Council currently provide Environmental Health Services?	Employs EHOs	29	16	45	66%
		Employs EHOs & "sells" some of their time	3		3	4%
		Shares portion of EHOs time with other Councils	7		7	10%
		Via an Authority (eg. EHA)		5	5	7%
		Purchases service from another Council	6		6	9%
		Purchases services from a private contractor	3		3	4%
		Other ( <i>specify</i> )			0	-
3	Is Council considering, or interested in investigating changing their Environmental Health service delivery model within the next 2 years?	YES	9	1	10	17%
		NO	32	18	50	83%
		Don't Know	7	2	9	-
5	If "YES" to 4 above provide comments on models of interest to Council		Various	Various	Various	

No.	Question	Choices	Regional	Metro	Total	***%
<b>QUESTION 6 TO 16 NOT REQUIRED TO BE COMPLETED BY E.H.A. MEMBER COUNCILS (hence only 16 metro group replies to this section of the survey)</b>						
6	How many (FTE) EH positions does your Council have including vacant positions?		40.04	72.95	112.99	
7	Estimate how many FTE EH positions your Council anticipates having in <u>12</u> months time?		41.56	78.45	120.01	(+7.02 FTEs)
8	Estimate how many FTE EH positions your Council anticipates having in <u>2 years</u> time?		46.36	82.45	128.81	(+8.8 FTEs) Total =+15.82
9	If your Council/Authority has needed to fill vacant/new EHO positions in the past have your calls generally attracted suitably experienced/qualified applicants?	YES	17	10	27	57%
		NO	15	5	20	43%
		Not Applicable / No Response	16	1	17	-
10	If "NO" to 9 above indicate reasons that you are aware of	difficult to attract staff to Council location	11		11	52%
		cannot attract experienced officers	1	2	3	14%
11		potential applicants expect higher salary than offered				
		Other ( <i>specify</i> )	4	3	7	33%
		No Response	32	11	43	-
12	How long does it generally take to fill vacant EHO positions	within 1 month	2	2	4	9%
		1 to 3 months	14	12	26	59%
		3 to 6 months	9	1	10	23%
		more than 6 months	4		4	9%
		not applicable / no response	19	1	20	-
13	If your Council/Authority has needed to find temporary or short term EHOs in the past have you been able to find suitable persons?	YES	13	9	22	54%
		NO	12	7	19	46%
		No Response	23		23	-
14	Estimate the length of time your Council is likely to need temporary or short-term EHO services over the next 2 years	No need anticipated	18	4	22	44%
		Up to 2 months work	9	4	13	26%
		2 to 6 months	2	7	9	18%
		More than 6 months	5	1	6	12%
		No Response	14		14	-
15	Is your Council/Authority prepared to offer work placement programs for students studying the Bachelor of Environmental Health?	YES	28	16	44	77%
		NO	13		13	23%
		Don't Know	7		7	-
16	If your Council has employed newly qualified EHOs in recent years detail significant knowledge / skills gaps, if any, compared to the jobs that they are expected to perform		Various	Various	Various	
<b>ALL COUNCILS PLUS E.H.A. COMPLETED QUESTION 17 TO 21</b>						
17	Does your Council usually charge fees for inspections of general food businesses?	YES	19	20	39	58%
		NO	27	1	28	42%
		Don't Know	2		2	-
18	Does your Council anticipate providing Auditing services when Food Safety Programs become mandatory for some industry sectors	YES	19	12	31	70%
		NO	13		13	30%
		Don't Know	16	9	25	-
19	Does your Council intend taking on a broader role from an environmental protection focus in the future?	YES	20	10	30	64%
		NO	11	6	17	36%
		Don't Know	17	5	22	-
20	If "YES" to above who is expected to carry out the bulk of that work for Council?	The E/Health section/officer	13	7	20	65%
		Other Council staff	10	1	11	35%
		Contractors / consultants			0	0%
		No Response	25	13	38	-
21	Please make any other comments would consider would be useful to the study		Various	Various	Various	

**APPENDIX B**

**TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN ORDERS OF THE ORGANISATION / PARTIES  
ANTICIPATED TO LEAD / IMPLEMENT THEM**

Org.	No.	Strategy
LGA	1	That the LGA approach Flinders University to examine strategies for increasing numbers of Environmental Health graduates..
	2 & 19	That the LGA lobby Flinders University to implement their proposal to develop a 2 stream post graduate course (1) for existing Environmental Health qualified persons wishing to upgrade their qualifications and skills and (2) a bridging program for graduates from related disciplines to gain an approved Environmental Health qualification which will allow them to practice as Environmental Health Officers.
	5	That as the LGA considers the applicability of the national skilled migrant program that the option to identify EHOs as one of the target groups be considered
	6	That the LGA prepare a marketing strategy focused on promoting working in local government as a career choice. EHOs to be included as one of the roles therein. (The target audience of the strategy to be high school students and suggested media to include video, DVD and CD Rom.)
	7 & 4	That a "careers in local government" section be developed and added to the LGA web site to help promote and explain career opportunities in local government. EHOs to be included as one the careers detailed therein. That the LGA include details of external education options within career information posted on their web site
	8	That the LGA consider seeking additional opportunities, such as attending university open days and career expos, to promote career opportunities in local government
	9	That the LGA develop systems and processes to collect, record and manage listings of qualified EHOs (and other professional services such as planning & building), available for temporary employment on the LGA web site. That the "temporary employment options" web page be marketed to recently retired EHOs, non-working EHOs and EHOs generally to build up the data base of persons available. That the "temporary employment options" pages be recommended to Councils as a readily available source of information of EHOs available for temporary assignment in SA.
	11	That the LGA work with the Department of Health to more clearly define the role and extent of environmental health services within local government including the requirement for Councils to address environmental health management within their strategic management planning process, or alternatively develop an Environmental Health Management Plan that links to the Council strategic plan
	16	That the LGA lead a research project to analyse costs, benefits, practicalities and implications of a range of models for delivery of professional services (covering EHOs, Planning and Building Officers) to regional Councils and Council groupings in SA. The models investigated to include regionalised central service delivery, sharing positions between Councils, on-selling services to other Councils and services via contractor. Also that the LGA form a group with representatives from regional Councils, the AIEH, Planning Institute of Australia, Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, Department of Health, Planning SA, Environmental Protection Authority and other appropriate bodies (eg. Regional Development Boards) to participate in the project
	22	That the LGA lead discussions regarding the options and benefits of introducing a step or program (eg. traineeships) in between completion of the Bachelor of Environment Health course and placement of EHOs in local Councils (may also be applicable for other professions – eg. planning & building).
26	That the LGA provide assistance and support to the AIEH to develop a professional information package for presentation to first year students of the Bachelor of Environment Health course. The presentation to include the benefits of working in local government.	
29	That the LGA, in conjunction with professional bodies, consider developing a recommended practice to Councils regarding an expected level of annual training hours / \$ budgets for EHOs and other professional staff with the aim of encouraging Councils to set aside appropriate and equitable training budgets.	

Environmental Health Services (Department of Health)	1	That the Department of Health approach Flinders University to examine strategies for increasing numbers of Environmental Health graduates..
	2 & 19	That the Department of Health lobby Flinders University to implement their proposal to develop a 2 stream post graduate course (1) for existing Environmental Health qualified persons wishing to upgrade their qualifications and skills and (2) a bridging program for graduates from related disciplines to gain an approved Environmental Health qualification which will allow them to practice as Environmental Health Officers.
	11	That the Department of Health implement a review of the Public & Environmental Health Act and work with the LGA to more clearly define the role and extent of environmental health services within local government including the requirement for Councils to address environmental health management within their strategic management planning process, or alternatively develop an Environmental Health Management Plan that links to the Council strategic plan.
	13	That the Environmental Health Service (EHS) offer a meet and greet program to new EHOs to familiarise them with roles and contacts within EHS.
	25	That EHS be encouraged to proactively offer study trips of relevant sites to assist Environmental Health students learning and understanding of environmental health issues
Flinders University	20	That Flinders University Department of Environmental Health's offer to reinstate their Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) be supported. That the first task of the committee be to consider ways to include more practical skills input to the existing program, including a review of the existing practical placement component. That invited representatives of the LGA, AIEH, DH and EPA be encouraged to accept invitations to become involved in the PAC.
	21	That the PAC examine aspects of the Bachelor of Environmental Health curricula with the aim of developing opportunities for participation and contributions from practising EHOs (particularly in areas such as the introduction to environmental health, public health law and public health engineering).
	28	That Flinders University broaden the work placement program run in the second year of the Bachelor of Environmental Health course to include state government as well as private sector partners (not just local government) to help students pursue their areas of interest.
University of Western Sydney (Hawkesbury)	3	That University of Western Sydney (Hawkesbury ) be advised of the expected shortfall between numbers of Environmental Health Officers available and the estimated need within SA over coming years – provides ideal timing for marketing their distance course to potential students through various conduits including the AIEH and the LGA.
AIEH	9	That the AIEH develop systems and processes to collect, record and manage listings of qualified EHOs available for temporary employment on the LGA / AIEH web sites. That the "temporary employment options" web page be marketed to recently retired EHOs, non-working EHOs and EHOs generally to build up the data base of persons available. That the "temporary employment options" pages be recommended to Councils as a readily available source of information of EHOs available for temporary assignment in SA. <i>(NOTE: should/when the LGA produce a similar web page service for 'local government' professions the AIEH may choose to replace their page with a cross reference to the LGA web site)</i>
	17	That the AIEH coordinate a project to develop a Power Point resource or similar to assist EHOs present at careers nights and alike. That the AIEH investigate the opportunity to produce a SA or national video resource to attract people to an EHO career.
	24	That the AIEH liaise with Flinders University to identify guest facilitators for a range of workshops and field trips covering practical issues identified as requiring more emphasis in the current curriculum.

	26	That the AIEH prepare a professional information package for presentation to first year students of the Bachelor of Environment Health course. <i>(NOTE: Recommendations also suggest LGA provides assistance and support to the AIEH in developing the presentation)</i>
	27	That the AIEH be requested to change the timing of their 3 day annual conference to better suit students studying the Bachelor of Environmental Health degree. That the AIEH invite Flinders Uni to participate via presentation of papers to the conference
	30	That the AIEH pre-plan their annual training programs well in advance and provide approximate programs and costing information to EHOs at an appropriate time to enable them to seek training budget allocations from their Councils.
	31	That the AIEH proposal to tie training to a continual professional development (CPD) scheme be encouraged and supported. That the AIEH consider allocating CPD points to those actively involved in providing training to others (eg. include those providing training in the employment setting such as the work placement program)
	33	That the AIEH prepare a case and apply to the LGA and the Department of Health for a budget allocation to assist the professional body provide training and development opportunities to students and officers in the Environmental Health sector.
Regional EHO groups	12	That regional EHO Groups be requested to make a practice of allocating one of their members to proactively support and mentor new EHOs commencing duties in single EHO Councils within their regions
	32	That regional EHO groups be encouraged to partner with agencies (eg. LGA, AIEH SIGs, Department of Health, EPA etc.) to bring speakers, training and educational opportunities to regional areas and to look for technological options (virtual learning platforms and processes) that offer opportunities to increase access to training and align with needs.
Councils (generally)	10	That Councils be encouraged to implement family friendly and flexible workplace policies and practices, such as part time and job share arrangements, to better meet the changing needs and profile of the EHO workforce and to maximise future recruitment and retention rates.
	11	That Councils be encouraged to address environmental health management within their strategic management planning process, or alternatively develop an Environmental Health Management Plan that links to the Council strategic plan.
	23	That where practical Councils be encouraged to provide traineeship/cadetship opportunities to 3 <sup>rd</sup> year Environmental Health students, similar to the model followed by Salisbury and Marion Councils.
	25	That Councils be encouraged to proactively offer study trips of relevant sites to assist Environmental Health students learning and understanding of environmental health issues
	29	That Councils be encouraged to set aside appropriate and equitable training budgets for EHOs and other professional staff.
Regional Councils	14	That Regional Councils ensure sufficient training \$ allocations and support are provided for EHOs to participate in training and networking opportunities
	15	That Regional Councils consider offering benefits like salary packaging, extra leave, rostered days off, flexi-time, rental subsidies, study leave, relocation cost reimbursement, permanency of positions and private use of vehicles to improve the attractiveness of the job and also to consider such actions as committing back-up and support via temporary staffing when EHOs take leave or have heavy workloads to deal with.
	18	That Regional Councils be encouraged to maximise their reach by advertising widely (eg. interstate) when seeking EHOs. (It was also noted that regional Councils should proactively consider traineeships as an option to increase the likelihood of attracting EHOs to their areas – <i>refer recommendation 23</i> )
EHOs	17	That local EHOs proactively and positively market the role of EHO within their communities - for example by attending high school career nights and partaking in high school work placement programs.

**Prepared by Viv Greaves, Manager Food Reform Support, Environmental Health Services 2004**

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