ehpa

Environmental Health Professionals Australia Ltd

Member Survey 2015 Summary

Improve – Maintain - Protect

Who Responded?

- 184 responses, primarily from local government. The majority worked in rural/regional areas in Victoria, and were fairly evenly divided between males and females. Most had permanent full-time or part-time positions, with the majority having 5 or more years of industry experience.

The Industry

- There was a general consensus that the current challenges facing the industry included:
  - a relatively static job market, with little movement of staff between employers
  - increased competition for the jobs that become available, including from overseas applicants

- Job satisfaction was generally positive, with most respondents expecting to remain in the profession for the medium to long term.

- In regards to graduates, employer respondents identified the key barriers to recruitment as being a lack of practical experience in undertaking the typical range of duties, a need for improved interpersonal and communication skills, and a greater need for onsite wastewater experience.

- In terms of the practical experience of graduates, many responders stressed the importance of Industry Based Learning (IBL), and the significant benefit this has for graduates seeking to enter the workforce. Respondents greatly valued experience in the specific work tasks of an EHO. There were also comments regarding the translation of university skills to the workplace, and adaptation to the workplace generally.

- In regards to communication and interpersonal skills, respondents focused on the need to be able to engage effectively with customers, and have strong conflict management skills.

- Respondents who noted the need for greater onsite wastewater experience stressed the need to improve on graduate's knowledge of the approval and inspection process.

- A small proportion of employers currently had an IBL student, however the IBL program enjoyed good support. In terms of the barriers involved in employing an IBL student, employers noted challenges getting students in rural/regional local governments and the consistency with which students are available, which impacts on future budgets. Several respondents noted that they would prefer to employ a technical officer or part-time EHO to ensure ongoing funding for the EFT position.

- The majority of employer respondents indicated that their council would support unpaid work experience for new graduates.

Professional Development

- The most significant barriers to undertaking professional development included limited available time, a lack of relevant training available and the financial cost.

- Almost all respondents reported that EHPA provides adequate training and support for professional development either most or some of the time.

- Almost a quarter of member respondents were currently participating in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program. Approximately a third of these were "unsure" if they were entering their CPD points or maintaining a folder of evidence. A substantial number of respondents were "unsure" if they were participating in the CPD program at all, perhaps indicating a need to enhance the awareness of the program and requirements to members.

- The major limiting factors involved in participating in the CPD program included a lack of awareness of the program, a lack of understanding of the process and a perceived limitation of the current information technology arrangements in place to facilitate it.

- The subjects/topics that respondents wanted EHPA to offer training varied considerably, but the most common themes included: consistent methodologies for EHO tasks; on-site wastewater; how to deal with difficult customers; changes in legislation; clandestine laboratories and emerging trends (ie allergens).

- Most respondents indicated a preference for 3-4 EHPA training forums per year, of either a full or half day duration. Many respondents identified that being regionally based presented challenges in regards to travel, and advocated for more regional training sessions.

- The Emergency Management Planning for Public Health Professionals and the Food Act Legal Management courses were both highly regarded, particularly in terms of relevance and the quality of the presentations.

- The annual EHPA Symposium also had highly positive feedback, with the majority of respondents considering the performance of past symposia as being good, very good or excellent.

EHPA

- More than 75% of respondents accessed the EHPA website at least some of the time. The main reasons for accessing the website were for the CPD program, and for employment or training opportunities.

- Respondents frequently noted that communications could be enhanced through a greater use of social media and the delivery of information, particularly training courses, through technology such as webinars.

- In regards to EHPA representation in different areas, respondents most commonly identified having representation with enHealth and to be involved in the re-accreditation process for public/environmental health courses.

- There was a broad breadth of suggestions regarding the way that EHPA might work with Environmental Health Australia (EHA), ranging from full reformation, continuing separation, and increased partnerships particularly in regards to training and re-accreditation.

- A third of respondents were members of a Special Interest Group (SIG). The major barriers to participating on a SIG were available time, work constraints and travel requirements.

- The majority of respondents attend Regional Group meetings, with most identifying the meetings as very important or most important. Many respondents identified that teleconferencing facilities would be of considerable benefit, particularly for regional councils.

- Overall, almost 80% of respondents were satisfied, more than satisfied or greatly satisfied that EHPA were meeting their needs.