Meeting notes – AlphaBeta and Workforce Reform 1 October 2019

Present: Ros Bauer and Stephen Beyers - Department of Health, Corin Moffatt and Ambika Sethia - AlphaBeta

Department officers explained the situation regarding the Department’s Aged Care Census and Survey, that is, no preparatory work has been undertaken within the Department at this stage for a 2020 survey and it is unlikely there is enough time to prepare for the usual type of project. We also explained that we had met with the Division’s data area who had described the previous process as long and protracted – and difficult. The usefulness of some of the data is also debateable.

We made it clear that some type of useful data collection was definitely required as the Department would be committing to this at the Royal Commission in October 2019 and had already done so through the FAS witness statement to the Commission.

We discussed options to address this situation, highlighting that the work of AlphaBeta is now quite crucial in deciding how to proceed.

Corin confirmed that from stakeholder negotiations it was apparent that the current Census was viewed as burdensome for many and not particularly useful to them in its current form. The data supplied also went out of date rapidly with long lead time between releases.

We discussed the international models presented in the draft report and how these may be applicable to Australia. In particular we were interested in how the industry became well engaged in the UK data collection system.

We agreed that a shorter more up to date report gleaning information from a variety of sources may be more appropriate than the current lengthy 4 year survey. Effectively the data environment is changing and more linked datasets as well as other information sources are likely to become available in the future.

It was suggested much of this data could be tapped into as these were established. LEED data which matched employers to employees is a good example but is still in development at this stage.

The Department expressed uncertainty about the current complaints data in that it may be quite limited and therefore not robust enough, but with the Aged Care Safety and Quality Commission coming on stream shortly and issuing reports from their audit activity in the future, we may be able to glean information from that body.

AlphaBeta have given an undertaking to make the current Part B of the report, which is blank at present, a detailed segment, supplying details on the current recommended 30 data items, including their relevance, robustness and accessibility.

It was reinforced that this area may be the most important for the Department and will likely inform how we proceed in regard to data collection on the aged care workforce and monitoring the implementation of the Workforce Strategy in the future.

AlphaBeta undertook to supply an updated report as soon as possible. We agreed that we would have a face to face meeting mid-October to discuss it. The Department undertook to pass on any suggested edits following receipt of the report.

Health mentioned that we had been informed by the Division’s data area that the last Census/survey was apparently completed more on-line than as a paper based survey and that this may need to be reflected in the report, which presently stated the opposite. This being the case, it opens up the possibility of a survey based principally on-line being conducted in the future.

The Department also mentioned that a procurement is being tended shortly for a registration process to be scoped for the non-registered workforce, which may open possibilities for on-line surveys in the future. But this is in the very early stage and will be dependent on the outcomes of the scoping study as to whether the Department progresses down this path.
Discussions including consideration of IT platforms which could be used or are being used by other similar surveys and how this could be utilised to encourage participation and for ease of access. The airlock data management was mentioned as it ensures anonymity of data collected by an independent body to be passed on to a third party for analysis. AlphaBeta recommended that this type of arrangement worked well in their experience. They will investigate further to include in the final report.

There was also discussions around how mandating survey participation may work or how this could be achieved. It was agreed that mandating requirements to providers was problematic. An alternate and preferred approach would be to engage industry stakeholders, including the Aged Care Workforce Council, in the development data collection system and what would be useful for them in terms of their local workforce planning.