

# Achievements statement

**Title:** Youth work, disability and aging—sustainable future for university courses

**Lead institution and year:** Edith Cowan University, report completed 2019

**Programme purpose:** This fellowship set out to improve availability of specialist degrees in youth work, aging and disability.

**Background:** Services for children and young people, for older people and for people with disabilities have not always treated service users supportively or with kindness and respect they deserve (as seen from *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* and *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*). A **vision of better services** has inspired changes to policy for services for people with disabilities, for young people and for senior citizens. **New thinking** occurred about what is needed so everyone can reach their fullest potential. **Policy responses** such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) require knowledgeable leadership to achieve their purposes. **Specialist degree courses** in youth work, aging and disability services can provide this expertise but are still **not available in most states** and are still at **risk of disappearing** from Australian higher education.

**Systemic action** is needed to ensure these courses survive.

**Project outputs/deliverables:** Accurate information about course availability. Trend data for each field. Models of collaboration. Documentation of systemic barriers to collaboration to improve availability. An action plan for how to save these essential specialist degrees. A paper explaining this won the [HERDSA 2018 best scholarly paper prize](#).

## Collaboration to save specialist degrees



**Impact:** Three national **cross-institutional working groups** are collaborating with professional associations in each field to **advocate for systemic change** (see Action plans in Appendix H) to support better availability of degrees in youth work, aging and disability.

## Project achievements

For youth work, disability and aging, this fellowship

has achieved:

- **mapping** of undergraduate degree availability in Australia;
- an analysis of **enrolment trends** in specialist courses and units in all three fields;
- an **analysis of barriers** to availability of these degrees;
- clarity about what to do next –actions needed by **policy makers**, by **universities**, by **academics** and by **professional associations**

**More information:** For more Information see the programme website [Youth work disability and aging futures](https://ywdaf.org) <<https://ywdaf.org>>

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