

Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA) response to the Job-ready Graduates Package draft legislation

About ACWA

The Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA) is the professional body for qualified community and human services practitioners in Australia.

ACWA leads the development, identity, registration and recognition of the community work profession in Australia. From setting educational standards through to determining an ethical practice framework, ACWA supports community and human services workers in every sphere of their work life.

Set up over 50 years ago ACWA, (previously known as the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers (AIWCW)) exists to ensure its members benefit from belonging to a recognised and respected profession and that the community benefits from an ethical and well-qualified community work labour force.

We believe that community work practitioners bear a great social responsibility and no matter what job title they hold or with whom they work they will benefit from belonging to a well-qualified, recognised, and respected profession.

The proposed legislation's impact

The new measures to reform Australia's higher education system will have adverse impacts on community and human services programs such as the Bachelor of Community Services, Bachelor of Community and Human Services etc. Under the proposed changes these students will pay double for their degree.

This will, naturally, reduce the number of aspiring community workers wishing to pursue relevant and accessible qualifications. And whilst we believe that this workforce should be more gender diverse and better paid, the reality is that this proposed policy will have a disproportionate impact on women. Women make up a large proportion of the community services workforce, many returning to work after child rearing and will struggle to afford higher fees. Higher fees also create significant barriers for other demographic groups that are badly needed in the sector such as Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and individuals with a second language.

The government itself has identified the community services sector as a key growth area and any barriers to study will limit the number of work ready graduates employable in both state government and non-government organisations. Sixty per cent of community workers reported an increase in the numbers of clients their services were unable to support during 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic has only increased the number of vulnerable Australians requiring critical community services. Work ready graduates are in high demand across various community services settings including family violence, justice, child protection, mental health, aged care, disabilities services. They are needed to perform critical functions such as crisis intervention, intake assessment and referral, case work and case management.

The demand for skilled community workers is rapidly growing due to an ageing population, growing migration intake, expanding needs of vulnerable families, and diverse populations. New funding

initiatives in the disability and aged care sectors also means this workforce is expected to double in the next few years and qualified community and human services workers will be well positioned to fill this requirement.

Employers are already struggling to fill vacancies as it is. ACWA is the skills assessing authority responsible for conducting migration skills assessments for community work related occupations. Through this role we are aware that many employers rely on overseas workers migrating to Australia to address the lack of qualified Australian professionals.

The state migration lists include the following occupations as in demand: Community Worker ANZSCO 411711, Welfare Worker ANZSCO 272613, Family Support Worker ANZSCO 411713, Youth Worker ANZSCO 411716, Welfare Centre Manager ANZSCO 134214, Residential Care Officer ANZSCO 411715 and Disabilities Services Officer ANZSCO 411712

ACWA accredited courses and job outcomes

ACWA accredits community and human services courses as part of our role as a professional body. ACWA operates from the principle that high-quality education and training underpins exemplary community services. Fundamental to ACWA’s role is the protection of educational, fieldwork and practice standards to ensure community workers are well qualified. We believe the community has the right to expect well educated and skilled community work practitioners who can be relied upon to provide a high standard of service.

We strongly believe ACWA identified community/human services degrees should be excluded from the proposed course fees funding reduction.

ACWA has been instrumental in establishing formalised training for community workers and is recognised nationally as the appropriate body for accrediting community services courses. Obtaining professional accreditation adds an additional layer of quality not covered by regulatory body accreditation. Today most employers expect graduates to be work ready and bring both theoretical knowledge and practical skills to the workplace.

As greater numbers of employers, including governments, take a risk management approach to employing qualified staff, they seek assurance that community service qualifications are sound and rely on third party endorsement. Short of making their own evaluations, students and employers rely on a reputable and respected body to make an assessment on their behalf.

Graduates from these courses are work ready, highly motivated and find employment in the areas of child protection, family violence support and prevention services, family and children’s services, juvenile justice, mental health, alcohol and other drug services, aged care, disability services etc., all of which are essential services. Qualified workers in our profession provide the immediate and much in demand practical support needed by many millions of Australians every single day

ACWA accredited degree	Education provider	Career outcomes identified by the education provider in consultation with industry
Bachelor of Community and Human Services	Federation University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Coordinator • Child Welfare Worker • Family Caseworker • Case Worker • Community Development Officer • Family Services Worker • Case Management Officer • Case Manager

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Worker • Community Development Worker • Family Support Worker
Bachelor of Community Mental Health, Alcohol & Other Drugs	Chisholm Institute of TAFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol and other Drugs Practitioner • Mental Health Worker/Practitioner • Youth Worker • Counsellor
Bachelor of Community Services	Box Hill Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Practitioner • Alcohol and Other Drugs Worker • Case Management Officer • Client Services Officer • Crisis Intervention Worker • Residential Care Officer • Juvenile Justice and Rehabilitation Officer • Disability Case Manager • Aged Care Case Manager
Bachelor of Community Services	Acknowledge Education Pty Ltd trading as Stott's College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare Centre Manager • Program Coordinator • Community Worker • Counsellor • Case Manager • Youth Worker • Juvenile Justice Officer • Child and Family Practitioner • Community Development Worker • Community Health Worker
Bachelor of Human Services	La Trobe University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Worker • Disabilities Services Officer • Family Violence Worker • Case Manager
Bachelor of Applied Social Science (Community Services)	Think Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and Family Services Worker • Community Worker • Aged Care Worker • Disabilities Services Officer • Indigenous Worker • DrugAnd Alcohol Counsellor
Bachelor of Community and Social Development	Western Sydney University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Worker • Welfare Worker
Bachelor of Community Welfare	Western Sydney University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Worker • Welfare Worker
Bachelor of Social Welfare	Southern Cross University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Worker • Disability Services Officer • Housing Services Worker • Youth Worker • Aged Care Worker • Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Worker • Community Engagement Worker • Mental Health Worker • Family Violence Worker
Bachelor of Community Services	The University of New England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare Support Worker • Care Coordinator • Community Services Case Manager • Community Services Coordinator • Aboriginal Community Care Worker

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Worker • Other roles in a range of community work, community development and care services, volunteer programs, residential facilities, correctional facilities, group homes, community agencies and government departments.
Bachelor of Humanitarian aid and development	Charles Darwin University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Development Worker • Humanitarian Assistance Worker • Community Worker • Welfare Worker
Bachelor of Human Services	Christian Heritage College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability and Aged Care Worker • Family Support Worker • Child Protection Worker • Youth Worker
Bachelor of Child and Family Studies	Griffith University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services Worker • Child and Family Welfare Worker • Child Protection and Child Safety Services Worker • Community Development Worker • Family Support Worker • Foster Care Worker • Women's Support Worker • Welfare Worker • Policy Officer • Research Officer
Bachelor of Human Services	Griffith University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Services Worker • Aged Care Professional • Disabilities Services Officer • Community Worker • Welfare Worker
Bachelor of Human Services	Queensland University of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged Services Worker • Child Care Professional • Child Protection Officer • Community Corrections Officer • Community Education Officer • Community Health Officer • Community Worker • Counsellor • Disability Services Worker • Family Services Officer • Human Services Practitioner • Policy Officer • Youth Worker
Bachelor of Human Services & Bachelor of Justice	Queensland University of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Manager • Child Protection Officer • Community Corrections Officer • Community Worker • Corrective Services Officer • Criminologist • Customs Officer • Disability Services Worker • Health Policy Officer • Youth Worker

Bachelor of Human Services & Bachelor of Public Health - Double degree	Queensland University of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Manager • Child Protection Officer • Community Worker • Director of Health Programs and Services • Disability Services Worker • Family Services Officer • Government Officer • Health Policy Officer • Human Services Practitioner • International Health Officer • Public Health Officer • Public Health Program Manager • Youth Worker
Bachelor of Human Services	University of the Sunshine Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Safety Officer • Case Manager • Disability Services Worker Youth Worker • Families Support Worker • Community Development Worker • Community Corrections Officer
Bachelor of Social Science (Counselling) & Bachelor of Counselling - Double degree	University of the Sunshine Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsellor • Disabilities Services Officer • Community Health Worker • Youth Worker • Welfare Worker • Child Protection Worker • Corrections Worker • Mental Health Worker • Aged Care Services Worker
Bachelor of Human Services - Child and Family Studies Major	University of Southern Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Support Worker • Child Protection Worker • Community Worker • Welfare Worker
Bachelor of Human Services - Community Development and Indigenous Studies Major	University of Southern Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Development Worker • Indigenous Worker • Child Protection Worker • Community Worker • Welfare Worker
Bachelor of Human Services - Health and Social Wellbeing Major	University of Southern Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment Officer • Aged Care and Disabilities Services Officer • Rehabilitation Worker • Case Manager • Community Worker • Welfare Worker
Bachelor of Human Services	EQUALS International (Aust) Pty Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Promotion Officer • Family Support Officer • Community Development Officer • Project Manager • Social Researcher • Welfare Worker/Community Worker (i.e. Outreach, Community Services, Child Protection, Family Services, Recovery Support, Youth, Placement Support, Bushfire Case Support Program, Intake and Mobile Support, Welfare,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Liaison, Disaster Relief, Preservation Case) • Counsellor (i.e. Abuse, Wellbeing, Telephone) • Youth Officer • Juvenile Probation, Child Safety, Tenancy, Community Development, Policy Development, Child Safety Officer • Client Services, Intake and Assessment Officer • Child Protection Worker • Disability Advocate • Policy Analyst • Job Coach • Case Manager
Bachelor of Psychological Science & Bachelor of Social Science (Human Services) - Double degree	University of South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Support Coordinator • Aged Care Coordinator • Community Development Officer • Crime Prevention Officer • Drug/Alcohol Caseworker • Policy Development Officer And Analyst
Bachelor of Social Science (Ageing and Disability)	University of South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Services Officer • Child and Youth Health Worker • Multicultural Services Worker • Healthcare Worker • Community Development Worker • Legal and Court Services Worker • Child and Family Wellbeing • Schools/Youth Worker • Mental Health Worker • Homelessness Services Worker • Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Worker • Correctional Services Officer • Drug and Alcohol Addiction Services Worker • Aged Care Worker • Domestic Violence Services Worker • Social Planning and Administration Officer • Researcher • Child Protection Worker
Bachelor of Social Science (Human Services)	University of South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Development Officer • Community Services Worker • Counsellor • Welfare Worker • Child Protection Worker • Project Manager • Policy Development Officer • Social Researcher
Bachelor of Social Science (Major in Children and Family Studies)	Edith Cowan University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Worker • Community Development Officer • Policy Officer • Family Support Officer, Parent Education Coordinator

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Officer
Bachelor of Social Science (Major in Human Services and Community Work)	Edith Cowan University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Worker • Community Development Officer • Policy Officer • Family Support Officer, Parent Education Coordinator • Project Officer

Many of the specialised post graduate programs in mental health, child protection and human services programs are not listed here, however they provide greater work ready pathways for graduates of relevant community and human services programs.

Professionally accredited qualifications as entry into human services occupations

Some of the many large employers in the community services sector who recruit ACWA accredited graduates are listed below:

Department of Health & Human Services (VIC) - Student placement program only provides work experience placements for students from ACWA, AASW or APS accredited courses. It requires applicants for child practitioner roles to possess, as a minimum standard, completion of an appropriate ACWA accredited qualification

Territory Families (NT) - requires eligibility for ACWA membership as an essential selection criterion for community welfare workers as well as other occupations

Department of Health (WA) - requires a relevant qualification and/or eligibility for membership as an essential minimum requirement for the position of welfare officer and youth welfare officer

Queensland Health (QLD) - requires ACWA eligibility for membership as an essential selection criterion for a range of occupations

Department of Health Tasmania – requires ACWA accredited qualifications

Conclusion

Social work specific courses in community services sector are professionally accredited by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). These courses are not listed in this submission as we understand the AASW is putting in a separate submission. We believe, however, community and human services which include *but are not limited to* social work programs produce work ready graduates who provide essential services to those most in need. During the recent bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic community and human services workforce played a very important role alongside our health workers in supporting the most vulnerable in our community. It is important to note a number of community and human services students in their final year are assisting the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services in the massive work of case managing COVID-19 patients in isolation.

We believe it is imperative for the government to recognise the community/human services workforce and the need for more, not less, workers in the sector. Classifying human services programs under the broad umbrella of Arts degrees will disadvantage the community, and the community services sector. And as a result the number of students wanting to undertake a human services degree will be forced into other professions or occupations. It is also important to note that

the vast majority of the human services work force are women and it is one of the lowest paid sectors. Putting additional pressure of human services students will significantly affect Australia's future workforce.

Attachments

- ACWA careers guide
- Community work occupations – Community workers' 50th Birthday media release
- Media release – proposed changes to university fees
- Copy of letter to Minister for Education, The Hon Dan Tehan MP
- Sample copies of job descriptions with ACWA accredited qualification/membership eligibility requirement (including state government requirements)
- Welfare and community worker, Department of Health Tasmania
- Samples copies of web pages of Universities with information on ACWA accreditation
- The social work and human services workforce – Report from a national study of education, training and workforce needs
- Shaping a career development culture: quality standards shaping paper

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