

## Agnieszka D. Nelson

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Agnieszka Nelson has been employed by the Department of Social Services since 2001.

In her capacity as Director of Evaluations, Agnieszka has worked to strengthen the Department's evaluation capability and culture through provision of training, advice and leading a team of researchers managing major policy evaluations. These include evaluations of income management trials in Northern Territory, Western Australia and in Place-Based sites.

In 2012, Agnieszka was awarded the Sir Roland Wilson Foundation PhD Scholarship.

Her thesis—a quantitative enquiry into the impact of welfare conditionality policy levers on youth disengaged from education, training and the labour market— seeks to understand the shifting objectives and effectiveness of welfare conditionality policy initiatives in Australia. Specifically, she is interested in examining the effects of sanctions and incentives on different treatment and comparison groups using longitudinal administrative data from Department of Social Services and Department of Employment— specifically constructed by her for this research.

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## What are Key Obstacles to Social Cohesion?

Social cohesion, its conceptualisation and measurement continues to be hotly debated by academics and policy makers alike. One fundamental ingredient to a cohesive society is the extent to which its community members have equal access to resources, including to education, employment or housing.

One population who are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion are youth for whom transition from education to stable full-time employment has become increasingly challenging and protracted. In Australia, for example, in 2014, almost one in four of all 16 to 24 year olds relied on welfare as a main source of income. For Indigenous youth, the figure is even more stark, with over half of all 16 to 24 year olds relying on income support.

Over 14 per cent of all young welfare recipients have been assessed as vulnerable— one in two of those for living with a disability, and one in four for homelessness. The remaining vulnerable youth consist of those who are recent migrants, those who have been exposed to domestic violence, those who were released from prison or those who have significant caring roles.

Using Research and Evaluation administrative data from Department of Employment, we examine income support exits among youth at risk of social exclusion by their characteristics and types of vulnerability.

