About SJSC

The Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre focuses on multi-disciplinary, theoretical and applied research on social justice issues and processes of social change.

The Centre emphasises:

- Working with and for people who experience disadvantage because of; gender, health, ability, age, race, creed, or socio-economic status.
- Social theory related to policy and practice, informed by the scholarship of engagement and strategies appropriate to researching with those whose voices have been silenced.
- Application of research skills of the members of the Centre to issues and processes around social equity, access, participation, resistance and change, informed by principles of distributive justice with particular relevance to Western Sydney.

SJSC's aims are to:

SJSC aspires to be a centre of excellence and innovation for applied research on social justice and the processes of social change. The SJSC is committed to developing collaborative partnerships with individuals, agencies and institutions for whom social justice is a crucial issue. The SJSC aims to:

- Engage in research that contributes to social change, through a focus on issues associated with our core values of Participation, Inclusion and Equity;
- Encourage research collaboration between academics and the Western Sydney community, including policy makers and practitioners;
- Facilitate an ongoing exchange of resources, expertise and knowledge between members of the SJSC and its associates, community groups and interested individuals, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally;
- Use and develop methodologies of research consistent with loosening the boundaries between researchers and participants, and between the academy and the community. Methods will be imbued by the imperatives of participation, inclusion and the recognition of multiple subjectivities, and;
- Provide a research facility that will attract students, scholars and community members to engage with and contribute to ongoing activities, aimed at social change towards a just society.

Areas of expertise

- Children and Childhood
- Urban Housing, Planning and Community Development
- Care and Caring
- Criminology and Criminal Justice Policy and Practice
- Social Determinants of Health, Public and Community Health
- Social Justice and Faith in the Context of Religious and Spiritual Change
- Community Engagement, Linkages, Activism and Practice

The Centre is distinctive in the diverse nature of its research projects
Objectives of the research program

The distinguishing characteristic of the Centre's work is the emphasis given to the voices, values and perspectives of the people whose experiences are being researched. This aims not only to bring those views to the attention of government, service providers and the broader community, but also to promote for marginalised groups access to information, self expression and participation in decisions affecting them.

Program 1. Challenging ageism in childhood, youth and ageing

The distinguishing characteristic of the Centre's work is the emphasis given to the voices, values and perspectives of the people whose experiences are being researched. This is particularly salient in our work with children, young people and older people.

Prof Jan Mason continues her work with children and children's research and international collaboration with Childwatch International and the International Society of Child Indicators (ISCI). The centre will be hosting an International conference on Children as Experts and International Child Indicators in 2009. Prof Mason has used the opportunity to focus attention on the importance of engaging with children in the research process by adding the symposium “Children as experts in their own lives”.

A/Prof Natalie Bolzan continued work on the ARC funded Community Foundations of Resilience of Young People which works with young people and their communities to identify social arrangements which facilitate resilience particularly, but not only, for marginalised young people from ethnically and linguistically diverse communities.

SJSC Director, A/Prof Rosemary Leonard completed her 10 year longitudinal study of midlife and older women with Dr Ailsa Burns from Macquarie University. This research explores their perceptions of their own lives and the many ways they contribute to their families and communities. A/Prof. Leonard’s Grey Nomads intervention study examined the untapped potential for visiting “grey nomads” to contribute to isolated rural communities through voluntary programs. In both studies older people are contributing to society and challenging the stereotypes of ageing.

A/Prof Jane Mears will continue international collaboration supported by her 2008 IRIS grant to coordinate international collaborative research on aged care programs, with the emphasis on dignity and respect for frail older people and their carers.

Major achievements

- The extensive community partnerships of the ARC funded Community Foundations of Resilience of Young People, with SJSC members Associate Professor Natalie Bolzan and Dr Fran Gale obtaining further funding and being recognised by a UWS Partnership Award;
- Under the leadership of Prof. Jan Mason and Associate Prof. Natalie Bolzan, SJSC were invited to host the International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI), conference;
- An international symposium on “Children as experts in their own lives: Developing Child Inclusive Research”;
• Professor Mary Kellet from the UK agreed to facilitate a Training Workshop for Children as Researchers associated with the ISCI conference;
• Springer agreed to publish a book on the outcomes of the “Children as experts” symposium;
• Visits by Swedish scholars Marta Zebehely and Stina Johansson in 2008 furthered comparative studies on Aged care in Sweden and Australia with A/Profs Jane Mears and Rosemary Leonard, and;
• YOTS have been impressed by the work of Dr Gwyther and have asked SJSC to help develop a new evaluation method based on the stories of young people and youth workers.

Program 2: Place, communities and social capital

This program is concerned with the way people engage with their location and build communities. It investigates the role and functioning of Third Sector organisations, especially locally based ones. It critically analyses the concept of social capital and the role it might play in empowering communities. The centre is strongly engaged in many partnerships with non-government and peak organisations in greater western Sydney and beyond. A series of successful projects and community seminars on Community Management have led to requests from community sector peak organisations for more extensive collaboration and community involvement in this area. The Centre continued to provide secretariat services for the cross-national research association: Australian & New Zealand Third Sector Research Incorporated (ANZTSR)

Two new projects will examine how community can be developed using the concept of social capital.
One, led by Dr Debbie Horsfall, is a new project around caring and social capital, developed in partnership with The Home Hospice. The team obtained funding from a UWS partnership grant in 2008. This project, beginning 2009, examines how caring can contribute to the social capital of a community. A recent application has been made to DADHC to extend the project and to include comparisons of Home Hospice and DADHC services with examples from Sweden.

The second is A/Prof Rosemary Leonard’s ARC Linkage project Investing and Cashing in Social Capital: Using denominational differences among Christian churches to identify the costs and benefits of different network patterns with A/Prof Richard Ollerton from the School of Mathematics and Computing in partnership with National Church Life Survey Research. This project will bring in $125,000 in research income and almost $180,000 in in-kind partner support over the next three years.

Another project led by Dr Ingrid Schraner, piloted in 2008 and now forming the basis of an ARC Linkage application in Round 1 of 2009, explores how disabled people can fully participate in their community through Assistive Technology.

Major achievements

• New international project: Following the successful visits by Prof Paul Fischer, Lake Forest College, Illinois and Prof Phil Nyden, Centre for Urban Research and Learning, Loyola University in 2008 Michael Darcy and Gabrielle Gwyther from SJSC will lead the internationalisation of its research with a significant new project. In collaboration with
centres at Loyola University and (hopefully) the University of Illinois, Chicago, the project engages and links residents of social housing and other disadvantaged communities in Sydney and Chicago. Already 2 such video link-ups have taken place, and;


**Program 3: Population health and equity**

This program recognises the social determinants of health. Health is not just a physiological condition but a symptom of disadvantage and marginalisation. The Men's Health Information & Research Centre (MHIRC) researches into issues concerning men. These include: male suicide (still 5 a day in Australia); the needs of older frail men (through a DADHAC funded project, an ARC proposal to do with carers of women with Alzheimer's and PG students working on the experience of health services by separated fathers); the experience of retired men; and the role of sport in civil engagement for younger men.

MHIRC have been active players in national and state men's health policies and will continue to promote rational and comprehensive policies in all areas affected by the social determinants of men's health (law, family matters, fathering, prisons and ageing, to name a few areas). MHIRC will do this through on-going networks built up by MHIRC, including men's health officers throughout the state, the national men's health conference, the Australasian Men's Health Forum and the Shed movement for retired men.

MHIRC continues to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' Male Health through: the Shed in Mt Druitt; supporting Aboriginal men's health groups across the state; continuing support to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' Male Health Convention; development of training programs for Aboriginal men, and; the "Revolving Door" Project which provides support, research and policy development with men out of prison.

Under the leadership of Associate Professor Meg Smith, SJSC has built up experience and expertise into the social aspects of Mental Health with SJSC approached by leaders in the field to engage in partnership research. Current partnerships include; the Mental Health Association, the Richmond Fellowship, the Mental Health Coordinating Council, NSW Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health Inc, Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill, Inc (ARAFMI). Two significant new projects will commence in 2009.

**Major achievements**

- Prof John McDonald was appointed as one of six new Federal Government Ambassadors for Men’s Health;
- Men’s health is now a recognised research activity in the ABS codes (it was absent from the old RFCD codes). While obviously others were involved, MHIRC has been actively lobbying for the recognition of men’s health for over 10 years;
- Two grants from the Mental Health Coordinating Council (totalling over $300,000) to study young peoples mental health issues, and;
- A/Prof Meg Smith was appointed President of the Mental Health Association.

**Emerging program: “Personal and ethical aspects of social justice”**
Research under this theme explores the social justice aspects of personal decision making and negotiating social relationships. The primary strand of this theme to date is the extensive Sexual Assault Prevention Education Research led by A/Prof Moira Carmody. A second strand concerns family relationships for Indigenous Australians and those from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Major achievements**

- A/Prof Carmody was appointed in 2008 to the ‘National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children’;
- Completion of her ARC funded project on *Sex and Ethics*. The book and manual were launched in December 2008;
- A/Prof Carmody gained funding from NASASV and Vichealth ($300,000) for new research for the implementation of the *Sex and Ethics Sexual Assault Prevention Education Program*.
- The project received funding for 2009 from The Ministry of Justice in New Zealand to provide expert advice on the implementation of the *Sex and Ethics Sexual Assault Prevention Education Program* in that country;
- A/Prof Carmody was invited to apply for funding from the Federal government (over $300,000) to trial the *Sex and Ethics Sexual Assault Prevention Education Program in three locations* (We have recently heard that the application was successful);
- A/Prof Carmody will lead the implementation of Sexual Assault Prevention Education Programs in NSW, and;
- Two grants from FACSIA to examine programs by Relationships Australia for Indigenous Australians and those from diverse cultural backgrounds.