Approximately 50 organisations external to UWS are working in partnership with Social Justice & Social Change Research. All our research projects are conducted in partnership with organisations in greater Western Sydney or at the State, National or International levels. The key to engaged research is the formulation of the research question. Above all else the question arises from the partners’ concerns and practices at the ‘grassroots’ level with the researcher working with the partner to hone their concerns into questions suitable for rigorous research. We have found that this course of action often requires a process of meetings or seminars and even public forums.

More deeply engaged research also involves developing the research methods collaboratively with the partners. Time, flexibility and creativity are sometimes needed to find ways to adequately capture the voices of the people most directly concerned. Hence, there is no doubt that engaged research - facilitating partners and marginalised people to fully participate in the research process - presents some specific difficulties not the least being the ‘shared’ control of the research process. So why engage?

Engagement allows us to do projects that would not otherwise be possible – non-English speaking carers, cannabis users who have a mental illness, homeless people and lawyers are some of the many groups that our partners not only help us to reach but also facilitate their participation in the research. A simple example is the homeless count where many more people were found in the areas where we had a homeless person assisting. Our creativity in research methods has made SJSC a recognised advocate for new methodologies.

Personally, I was also motivated by hearing the terrifying statistic that the average journal article is read by one person other than the reviewers. If we only publish in journals there is the real risk that all our good work will be wasted. Partners provide the avenue for reaching practitioners and policy makers – they are usually far better at advocacy than we are.

Most importantly, however, for a research group committed to social justice, engagement that demystifies research and gives voice to the marginalised and full and meaningful participation of the people who are likely to have the most interest in the research outcomes, is an end in itself.

SJSC has developed guidelines for engaged research which are available on our website www.uws.edu.au/sjsc.

Rosemary Leonard
Leader SJSC Research

**Stories of Struggle**
SJSC Postgraduate: Guy Gillor

Today, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) represents over 140 community-controlled health organisations. It evolved in the early 1990’s from a previous organisation, the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation (NAIHO), which evolved in 1974 from the first few health services. Some saw NAIHO as one of the most significant Aboriginal voices of its time, yet its politics and development remain largely unwritten.

Guy Gillor, a PhD candidate at SJSC, traced the political development of this vital organisation. As he searched archives, libraries and databases for scraps of information about the development of the movement, he came across newsletters of the first Aboriginal Medical Service, established in Redfern. Although there was no complete collection, he has pieced together newsletters found in two main places; the National Library archives and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra.

The newsletters reveal many insights into the struggle of NAIHO. On May 14, 1980, a NAIHO delegation was invited to Canberra to discuss the recommendations of three new reports on Aboriginal health, both recommending drastic improvements to funding community-controlled services. This was the first time high-level officials- including Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, Health Minister Michael McKellar, and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Fred Chaney had met with representatives of the movement. The NAIHO delegation was honoured with a chauffeur-driven government car and was told that the government was considering adopting the recommendations. So the report-back from the meeting in the newsletter was cautiously optimistic.

But as the cartoon pictured here suggests, all was not as it seemed. When they asked for funds for remote delegates to attend the NAIHO conference, the request was denied on the grounds that NAIHO “would not be in a position to discuss” the meeting with Prime Minister Fraser, as the government still had not decided to adopt the recommendations. NAIHO confronted Prime Minister Fraser and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Chaney on this decision, a confrontation which revolved around the basic democratic nature of the movement. The recommendations were never fully adopted, but the talks between NAIHO and Prime Minister Fraser had been tape-recorded (openly) and were eventually exposed in the AMS newsletters.
SJSC research provides first picture of Parramatta’s homeless

On the night of Monday 15th February 2010, the Parramatta Street Count assessed the number of ‘rough sleepers’ without adequate shelter on Parramatta’s streets, as well as the number of people using emergency and crisis accommodation such as hostels and refuges. The count was made possible by the efforts of 130 volunteers, who undertook a training course and were led on the night by trained supervisors.

The count was part of a wider research partnership between Parramatta City Council and SJSC Research, to inform the development of a strategy on homelessness. The results of the count identified a total of 366 homeless residents, comprising of 81 rough sleepers and 285 sleeping in emergency and crisis accommodation.

Associate Professor Michael Darcy, from Social Justice Social Change Research at UWS, said it is important to develop a thorough understanding of the extent and experience of homelessness.

“Having these figures is extremely helpful, as it provides a clear picture of the homeless situation in Parramatta as well as evidence that homelessness is a problem that is not confined to the centre of the city”.

Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Cr Paul Garrard, says the Parramatta Street Count project has provided firm data that will assist in future policy development to combat homelessness.

“The data includes consultations with homeless people, businesses and service providers to better understand the reasons people end up sleeping on the streets,” says Cr Garrard. “Our homelessness policy will be developed to improve social outcomes and this data will be invaluable.”

No Free Speech without Fair Speech
Unspeakable: a feminist ethic of speech by Betty McLellan

Associate Professor Jane Mears from SJSC launched Betty McLellan’s latest book at an SJSC seminar on 22nd March. The book analyses the democratic principle of freedom of speech from the perspective of feminist ethics. Central to an understanding of the ethics of speech is an analysis of the silencing of speech. She discussed the kinds of tactics used to silence all dissenting voices with a particular focus on the silencing of women through violence subordination and exclusion.

“The democratic principle of freedom of speech, so closely guarded by members of the power elite in all democracies, is in fact a right accorded only to the powerful, - members of disempowered groups are denied the right to speak and be heard”.

Betty concluded that, “for speech to be universally free, it must first be fair. We need to understand and recognise this and to have the courage and the fortitude to continue speaking through the silencing”.

Betty’s upfront and feminist style provoked a lively discussion from the 30 academics, students and community workers from Western Sydney who attended.


Betty McLellan is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work and Community Welfare at James Cook University.

SJSC Research
Economics of Kinship Care

In November 2009 SJSC Researchers Dr Ainslie Yardard, Adjunct Professor Jan Mason and Dr Elizabeth Watson published Kinship Care in NSW: Finding a way forward, a report on issues around the support and supervision of Kinship Carers. This report resulted in the Springwood Neighbourhood Centre becoming the community partner for one class of the unit Economics and Finance Engagement Project. This is based on the preparatory work of SJSC’s Dr Ingrid Schraner and the Springwood Neighbourhood Centre Coop and the Kinship Care Regional Project.

With additional support from Elizabeth Watson, Jan Mason, Associate Professor Natalie Bolzan and Associate Professor Michael Darcy four scenarios were developed, which 3rd year students in the School of Economics and Finance now stress test, using a technique commonly used in banking and finance. This will allow the students to highlight the economic consequences for the carers when children come into kinship care, and to critically evaluate some of the consequences of NSW policies regarding kinship care.

The photo pictured above shows Robin Thomas from the Springwood Neighbourhood Centre in class with her student groups. The students appreciate Robin’s resourceful coaching in learning how to work as a consultant and embrace the challenge of using their skills in economics and finance to develop an analysis that can make a real difference.

“A lot of work has gone into the development of the four scenarios over summer” Robin says, “but it is very rewarding to see students using them applying some of the skills they have learned in different contexts and how they then begin to investigate the economic implications of social policies and to critically evaluate what they have learned in their degrees. We are looking forward to reports that will provide sound evidence about the economic situation of kinship carers, which we simply do not have at the moment.”