



Social Work
Innovation Research
Living Space

SWIRLS

Social Work Innovation Research Living Space

The world is a whirlpool of information, theories, opinions and facts. We take the spin out, concentrate on research that uses evidence and lived-experience, and create innovative solutions in and around social work.

Our game plan is to progress social work, policy and research. We're doing things differently.

INTRODUCTION

VICE PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DEAN

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGY & SOCIAL WORK



Across Australia, we have an expectation that our society will be fair, supportive, and inclusive. Sadly, this is often not the case. The social challenges facing individuals, groups and communities are complex and wide ranging. Nationally, we struggle with issues of child protection, domestic and family violence, housing and homelessness, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and many other social problems.

Flinders University is determined to make a difference. Consequently the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work has established the Social Work Innovation Research Living Space (SWIRLS), bringing together a group of social work academics to create a leading national social work research centre.

SWIRLS joins the Orana Institute, which focuses on multi-disciplinary research and discovery in mental health, wellbeing and neuroscience.

SWIRLS aims to generate new evidence and research to support the development of policy and practice across the fields of social work and, where research and evidence already exist, to translate this work into policy and practice.

SWIRLS' 'living lab' approach is co-designed with key stakeholders and led by academics with a deep field-based understanding of social issues. Reflecting our mission of *changing lives and changing the world*, our partnerships with government and community organisations are helping to develop innovative solutions for some of our most difficult social challenges - improving lives and creating safer, stronger, more stable societies.

Professor Michael Kyrios
Vice-President and Executive Dean
College of Education, Psychology and Social Work
Flinders University



KEY FEATURES

WE'RE DEVELOPING A FORMIDABLE REPUTATION FOR PRODUCING THEORETICALLY DRIVEN RESEARCH TO EXAMINE SOCIAL ISSUES AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN OUR EVER-EVOLVING WORLD.

Our research tackles many of the challenges that social workers face, including:

- Child protection
- Closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- Disability
- Domestic and family violence
- Imprisonment
- Health and human services
- Housing and homelessness
- Quality of life

Social workers seek out knowledge by understanding their clients' personal meanings and problems, as well as the social and institutional issues that cause and contribute to inequality and oppression.

We deal with complex problems that need nuanced, evidence-based responses. In doing so, we embrace innovation, creativity, risk-taking, collaboration, and fresh perspectives. The evidence we produce—when put into action—will help social workers to work more effectively with our communities.



PROFESSOR SARAH WENDT

...is a champion of listening.

Whether she's interviewing a survivor of domestic violence or leading her team of SWIRLS researchers, Sarah believes in the importance of listening to diverse voices. She values the experiences of people around her

...is comfortable with being uncomfortable.

She's both a collaborator and a leader. She was rural-born and the first in her family to go to university. Domestic violence, child abuse and racism are just a few of the difficult social problems she tackles every day. It is her job and her passion.

...is an expert in design.

She's savvy and skillful when it comes to designing research. That means she's the first person to ask if you're developing qualitative and mixed-methods evaluation and research, development of interview schedules, ethics requirements, recruitment protocols and data analysis.

...is a driver of change.

She is a doer, a go-getter, a trailblazer. She is leading SWIRLS in a push for social change, development and cohesion.



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LORNA HALLAHAN

...is an advocate.

She has been a social worker for over 35 years and an advocate for people with disability issues for over 25 years.

...is a complex thinker.

She is a social worker, researcher and person with lived experience of disability. Lorna's personal and professional experiences have been critically important in shaping her understanding of effective social work practice and social policy.

...is a master of policy.

She is strategically pushing for change across disability policy, adoption law, and workers' rights across human and health services. She's the first person we turn to when new legislation hits.

...is the person who shows up.

She is a council member, a chair, a co-chair, a deputy chair, a chief investigator. She's speaking up and out about social justice.





KEY FEATURES

- SWIRLS IS NOT A BUILDING. IT IS AN EVER-CHANGING SPACE DEFINED BY THE PEOPLE WHO CREATE IT.
- WE TACKLE THE BIG ISSUES, AND WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO QUESTION THE STATUS QUO.
- COLLABORATION AND OPEN INNOVATION ARE AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO.





THE LIVING LAB

SWIRLS USES THE 'LIVING LAB' APPROACH. THIS MEANS WE BRING TOGETHER RESEARCHERS, PRACTITIONERS, POLICY PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WHO ENGAGE WITH SOCIAL WORK AND RELATED PROFESSIONS TO CO-DESIGN PROJECTS.

It's not your usual academia. We're transgressing the lines drawn between us to bring a fresh perspective to complex problems and the solutions they need.

This way, we know what's happening 'on the ground'. We know what social workers think will work, and what policies our governments might enact. We are adaptable and responsive. Our work is inter-disciplinary.

Our research environment is informed by appreciative inquiry and participatory action research. We offer evidence that has the power to promote social justice values and shape our future workforce through knowledge, education, and professional development.

Across it all, we design better prevention, intervention and services. We change policy and practice. We educate and mentor the future of social workers. And we help to empower and uplift individuals, families and communities.





COLLABORATION/CO-DESIGN

CODESIGN IS A WAY OF LIVING, WORKING AND BEING IN THE WORLD. AT ITS HEART, IT IS THE SHARED GOAL OF MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

SWIRLS is formed around the goals of collaboration, partnerships, and open innovation to tackle complex social problems.

Our partnerships with industry, community groups and government bring together applied research excellence, the practice wisdom and field-based knowledge of social workers, and the lived experiences and knowledge of individuals, families, groups and communities.

OUR PARTNERS

Department for Child Protection
 Early Intervention Research Directorate
 Emerging Minds
 Guardian for Children and Young People
 Housing SA
 KMY Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Services
 Parenting Research Centre
 Uniting Communities
 Women's Safety Services SA

COLLABORATE WITH US

Contact Flinders University today to see how we can build a powerful research partnership with your organisation.

flinders.edu.au/swirls



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We recognise that Flinders operates on Indigenous peoples' traditional lands and waters and acknowledge their continued responsibility to care for country at the University's various teaching locations, including the lands and waters of the following peoples: Kaurna, Arrernte, Boandik, Bungarla, Gundilynara, Jawoyn, Larrakia, Nauo, Ngarrindjeri, Peramangk, Murundjeri, Yolgnu.

MEET THE TEAM



MEET THE TEAM



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
KRIS NATALLIER**
is a sociologist with expertise in the design and implementation of mixed method and qualitative research and evaluation.



DR PRISCILLA DUNK-WEST
is an expert in identity, relationships and parenting and known for her scholarship on social work identity and practice.



DR MICHELLE JONES
has spent the past 15 years working in evaluation and research roles in government.



DR HELEN MCLAREN
is motivated by the idea of better lives for women, children and communities.



DR KATE SEYMOUR
is known for her scholarship on masculinities, building her expertise in gender and violence.



DR CARMELA BASTIAN
is an early career researcher committed to child and family wellbeing and social work practice excellence.



DR JENNY VAN DER AREND
has over 15 years of work experience in a range of government and non-government positions across social policy sectors.



MIA MANDARA
is an early career researcher in social work and social and family policy.



DR ANNIE JARVIS
brings in excess of 30 years of practice in the field, including experience in child protection, mental health, and the education of social workers.

STAY UPDATED

For more information about our world-class facilities, services and engagement opportunities, visit our website at: flinders.edu/swirls



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