Social Work @ Melbourne
NEW DIRECTIONS
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OUR VISION

**PREPARING** outstanding social workers who are strong ethically, academically and professionally

**LEADING** research that impacts locally, nationally and internationally

**WORKING** with others to make a difference
WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LAND AND ARE COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS
Social work education at the University of Melbourne has a long and distinguished history. Since our first students graduated in 1941, generations of students have accessed and contributed to the richness of our teaching, learning and research environment. Many of our alumni have gone on to assume leadership positions across the broader community. Our current students continue to demonstrate leadership, further enhancing our reputation within the discipline.

Our recent move into the Melbourne School of Health Sciences creates many opportunities for us to further strengthen our research and practice leadership in the areas of health and mental health. The generous Felton bequest has also enabled us to develop a strong foundation of research and practice leadership in child and family welfare practice. As we move forward, we will incorporate these important developments, along with key disciplinary imperatives, to support our future strategic planning and development.
EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP IN RESEARCH
Research in social work will support and develop knowledge leadership within a social justice framework across diverse areas of policy and practice.

**OUR RESEARCH CLUSTERS**

**Child, Youth and Family**
- Capturing the essence of knowledge-informed practice

**Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing**
- Exploring collaborative responses in key practice areas

**Social Justice and Human Rights**
- Responding to local, national and international concerns
Our Child, Youth and Family Research Cluster builds on the success of the Child and Family Safety and Wellbeing collaboration with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and the Alfred Felton Trust. Our aim is to provide leadership in child protection, family support, and family violence research and practice.

In the next phase of our development we will focus on four key areas:
EXPANDING THE BOUNDARIES OF KNOWLEDGE IN SOCIAL WORK
BUILDING COLLABORATIVE STRENGTHS IN ALLIED HEALTH
We have a strong reputation for quality research in the area of health and mental health social work. This is achieved through reciprocal partnerships with services across the sector nationally and internationally. Being in the Melbourne School of Health Sciences provides important opportunities for us to strengthen interdisciplinary collaborations.

Our research cluster explores issues across the micro/macro spectrum:

**People adapting**

People are confronted with health and mental health issues. We are particularly interested in the ways individuals and families adapt to or cope with ageing, trauma, cancer, chronic disease, alcohol and other drugs, depression and anxiety.

**Professional workforce**

A strong and professional workforce is critical for health and social service delivery. We are interested in evidence-informed practice, training our students and postgraduate scholars, and developing capacity within our professional and inter-professional roles.

**Community resilience**

Communities can support people through formal and informal networks. We are interested in understanding resilient communities – how they are built and sustained to support physical and emotional wellbeing.
Social justice rests at the heart of social work practice and research. Notions of social justice also rest at the heart of human rights concerns and contribute importantly to rights-based practice in social work. This is a new research focus for us that will influence our established research clusters and become the true north of innovative practice within our research agenda.

Our Social Justice and Human Rights Cluster

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- Supporting marginalized groups
- Challenging disadvantage: Working toward the development of research and practice initiatives that challenge the relationships of dominance and oppression expressed across a range of contexts: personal, institutional, cultural and social
- Promoting rights-based ideas: Leadership in rights-based practice frameworks that are supported by evidence, accessible and useful in practice
- The welfare state and the wealth-fair state: Critiquing Neo-liberalism, locating practice within the broader political economy to understand the adverse social impacts that flow from increasing inequality
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPLICATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR PRACTICE
Supporting a vibrant, lifelong learning environment
Social Work Teaching and Learning at Melbourne

Our courses have a strong reputation for high quality, research-based learning. We aim to ensure that our teaching and learning environment reflects the concerns and interest of field practice, demonstrates the importance of the research/practice nexus, and provides leadership opportunities for students.

In the next five years we will focus attention on the quality of our students’ experience:

**Supporting a high quality professional Masters**
- Benchmarking our teaching and assessment methods against international best practice
- Internationalising the curriculum
- Developing e-learning strategies in all areas of teaching and learning
- Tracking student pathways from selection to graduation
- Working to ensure course content reflects indigenous concerns

**Developing our field education programme**
- Reinforcing the educational and research focus within our fieldwork programme and integration across the MSW curriculum
- Collaborating with agencies to develop new and innovative practicum models
- Utilizing e-portfolio and other e-learning technologies
- Identifying and developing strategic international relationships

**Increasing our responsiveness in higher degree teaching and learning**
- Building on the strong reputation of the University of Melbourne as a research intensive university
- Creating a climate of research excellence and leadership within the profession through the fostering of student research publication and scholarly presentations
- Building new higher degree pathways
- Creating processes that are engaging, transparent and supportive of students to ensure they have the best possible chance of success
Social work has a rich tradition of collaborative engagement. We have a strong alumni and we value highly our local, national and international relationships.

Our commitment to community engagement recognizes the importance of our history, creates opportunities for purposeful collaboration and builds on our strengths to maximize opportunities:

**Building upon a strong foundation**
- Work alongside our alumni to maximize opportunities
- Work toward the strengthening of the alumni and their critical presence within the Department and identify funding opportunities to support the alumni administratively

**Supporting disciplinary leadership**
- Demonstrate our commitment to disciplinary leadership through the development of strategic alliances with key international schools of social work
- Establish key partnerships to support professional education and development

**Promoting knowledge engagement**
- Support and coordinate research through the profiling of social work publications
- Focus attention on practice research and the ways in which academic and field partnerships can support the transformation of research into policy and practice
RICH COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS THAT FOSTER STRONG RESEARCH AND TEACHING
We are committed to promoting cultural diversity in our student body striving to support the greater engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
Our students represent the future strength of our profession. The breadth and quality of their social work education provides a firm foundation for future leadership.
Our staff are committed to pushing the boundaries of knowledge, capturing the essence of evidence-informed practice, and responding to key concerns across local, national and international communities.
PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF KNOWLEDGE
Social work at Melbourne has a distinguished history. We celebrate our pioneers and work with our alumni to foster a vibrant and dynamic profession. Our collective strength supports our past, present and future success.
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