

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2025



INTRODUCTION

The Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) undertakes transformational, solution-focused research to address new and emerging challenges facing society. ISSR is an international leader in advanced interdisciplinary and evidence-based social science research, and works collaboratively with government and the private and not-for-profit sectors on pressing social science challenges across four key impact areas:

- Social Policy and Practice
- Health
- Education
- Innovation and Technology

This research is underpinned by cutting-edge social science methodologies including: advanced data analytics, participatory and innovative qualitative research, observational and bio-metric measurement techniques, experimental research designs, and the design and implementation of social intervention evaluations. Our strong focus on co-designed research, and commitment to ongoing training and development provides significant engagement opportunities for our staff, postdoctoral students, and industry partners.

ISSR is the administrating headquarters for the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course, an international collaboration of 22 organisations working to identify the drivers of deep and persistent disadvantage and develop innovative solutions to address it. From 2020, ISSR will also host a node of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child as well as a site of the Centre for Social Data Analytics, based at Auckland University of Technology.

FOREWORD

Message from the Director

Over the next five years, my vision is that ISSR consolidates its position as Australia's leading social science research entity. We will continue to strengthen our reputation as the go-to place for co-developed research, evaluation frameworks, data platforms and surveys, and health, education and social service interventions that make a meaningful difference to people's lives.

Established in 2008, ISSR has matured into a contemporary, agile organisation that has the capacity to grow in new areas of capability to meet government and industry needs, and to address major societal challenges. We are proud of our unrivalled, interdisciplinary approach to tackling important social science research questions, and of our partnerships with other researchers, funders and stakeholders, including communities, to achieve real impact for people, populations, places, services and policy. Effective knowledge exchange and research translation are the foundations for continuing to foster and build these partnerships.

This Strategic Plan has been developed by ISSR's leadership group in consultation with staff and the Institute's Board. It is also aligned with the strategic direction of The University of Queensland. The ISSR Strategic Plan commits us to:

- being solution focused to address big societal challenges,
- recognising that multidisciplinary research and collaboration are central to achieving transformational change and impact,
- maintaining a clear strategic path that is attractive to recruitment, retention and the career development of staff and higher degree students, and
- continuing to build a diverse funding base to ensure ongoing growth and sustainability.

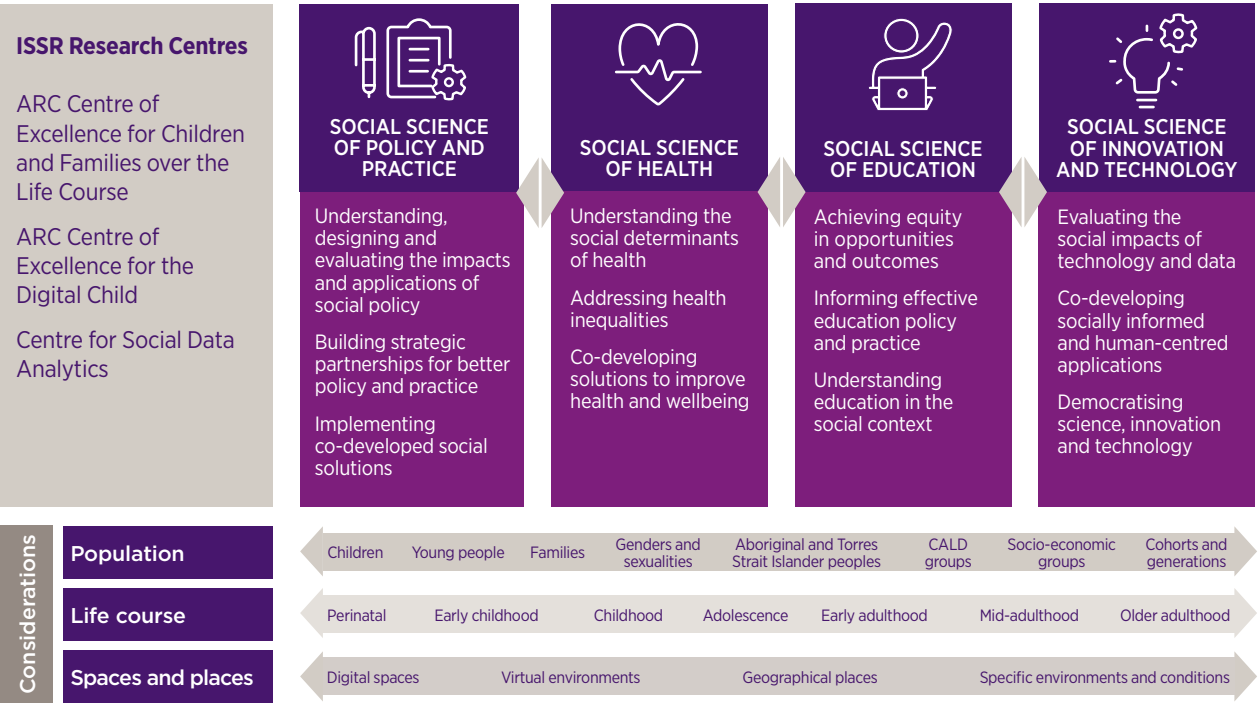
ISSR has an exciting future ahead.

Professor Mark Western

ISSR STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

VISION	Making meaningful difference to people's lives				
MISSION	We undertake transformational research to solve critical social challenges				
GOALS	Cultivate an enriching workplace culture	Innovate, collaborate and influence for impact		Deliver uncompromising quality in research and translation	
WHAT WE WILL DO	Ensure growth and sustainability				
	Build stakeholder and partner value				
	Have effective and efficient processes				
	Develop and support our people				
OUR VALUES	Pursuit of Excellence	Creativity and independent thinking	Honesty and accountability	Mutual respect and diversity	Supporting our people

ISSR IMPACT AREAS 2020-2025



SOCIAL SCIENCE OF POLICY AND PRACTICE



Objectives

- Understanding, influencing and evaluating the impacts of social policies and programs
- Building strategic policy and practice partnerships
- Co-developing and implementing social solutions

What we do

ISSR builds deep partnerships with policymakers, researchers, citizens and external agencies to undertake solutions-focused research. We develop infrastructure and design activities to advance social science methodologies, data analytics, research translation, public policies, and capacity to inform policy making. We work to ensure that policy and practice make a meaningful difference in people's lives.

Building on and challenging current approaches, ISSR seeks to align research with policy impact in areas such as child, family and community wellbeing, inequality, social disadvantage, vulnerable populations and international development.

ISSR contributes to the evidence base for population- and place-based policy interventions, innovative social governance and other policy approaches to address the complex challenges of inequality, poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion.

Impact Themes

- Child, family and community wellbeing
- Inequalities and social mobility
- Strengthening vulnerable populations and places
- International development effectiveness
- Co-developed Policy and Practice

Lead Researchers

- Professor Tim Reddel
- Professor Janeen Baxter
- Professor Mark Moran
- Professor Karen Thorpe
- Professor Lisa McDaid
- Associate Professor Wojtek Tomaszewski
- Dr Jenny Povey

SOCIAL SCIENCE OF HEALTH



Objectives

- Understanding the social determinants of health
- Addressing health inequalities
- Co-developing health and wellbeing solutions

What we do

ISSR is committed to addressing health inequalities and improving the health and wellbeing of all. We study the context of health and wellbeing across the life course, focusing on how the conditions in which people are born and live shape their health, and how the people, environment, settings and institutions they interact with affect their wellbeing. Our research focuses on enabling the strengths, protective factors and resources of individuals, communities and the health systems that support them.

ISSR researchers apply cutting-edge design and methodological and statistical expertise to investigate how early life experiences, social supports and policy decisions influence health. We work with stakeholders to develop health improvement interventions and test and implement these at scale, engaging with communities to understand lived experience and co-develop solutions. Key research areas are: maternal, perinatal and child health, obesity, sleep, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and syndemics – understanding the complex interplay of multiple social and health problems.

Impact Themes

- Health in context
- Ethical and social implications of health
- Strengths and resiliencies in communities
- Health systems and services

Lead Researchers

- Professor Lisa McDaid
- Professor Karen Thorpe
- Professor Rhema Vaithianathan
- Professor Simon Smith
- Associate Professor Abdullah Mamun
- Associate Professor Fran Boyle
- Dr Caroline Salom
- Dr Sally Staton

SOCIAL SCIENCE OF EDUCATION



Objectives

- Achieving equity in opportunities and improving outcomes
- Informing effective education policy and practice
- Understanding education in the social context

What we do

ISSR works to support the conditions for children, young people and mature learners to achieve their educational and life potential. We aim to provide social-scientific foundations and evidence in education that will lead to the building and sustaining of positive life trajectories.

Our researchers seek to understand and improve quality, practice and access in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector. Using social science, cognitive and developmental science, ISSR research influences policy, workforce and funding models. We are advancing new knowledge about how ECEC contexts and the practice of educators impact on early life experiences, with consequent effects on relationships, behaviours, learning and health.

ISSR researchers are developing new knowledge about aspirations, participation, achievement and attainment in primary and secondary schools, and higher education. Parental engagement in education settings and child and student learning are important for positive educational outcomes, and our researchers are looking at new ways to engage and support parents to take active roles in their children's education.

Our work in education has a strong focus on educational equity, identifying the enablers and barriers to effective engagement and educational success for people from diverse social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Our work leverages cutting-edge, innovative statistical and data analytic methodologies, and has a strong focus on practice through evaluating major educational initiatives and trialling new interventions.

Impact Themes

- Equity in educational opportunities
- Innovations and learning futures
- Student experiences and transitions
- Parent and community engagement
- Learning analytics and evaluation

Lead Researchers

- Professor Karen Thorpe
- Professor Simon Smith
- Associate Professor Wojtek Tomaszewski
- Dr Jenny Povey
- Dr Sally Staton

SOCIAL SCIENCE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY



Objectives

- Evaluating the social impacts of technology including AI and ubiquitous monitoring
- Co-developing socially informed and human-centred applications
- Democratising science, innovation and technology

What we do

Technological advances such as Artificial Intelligence and innovations in biomedical science are set to disrupt social and economic structures. ISSR's social scientists are at the forefront of work with industry and governments to document the societal benefits and develop methods and strategies for managing adverse societal impacts. For example, our ARC Centres of Excellence researchers are exploring digital life and digital futures for children and families and the role of technology in reducing entrenched disadvantage.

Our researchers use advanced analytics on big social service data sets to improve risk identification and targeting of services, demonstrating how these technologies can be used for benefit in the public sector as well as the private sector. We lead the use and development of new analysis methods (e.g. actigraphy), new technologies (e.g. light sampling approaches) and technology-based interventions (e.g. the use of wearables to support behaviour change).

Our researchers work with a range of technological disciplines to address the social and human contexts of science and innovation including ethical concerns and social licence.

Impact Themes

- Social licence, ethics and governance
- Machine learning for social and health data analytics
- Social benefits and risks of emerging technologies
- Tools and technological solutions for social good

Lead Researchers

- Professor Rhema Vaithianathan
- Professor Simon Smith
- Professor Mark Moran
- Professor Tim Reddel
- Associate Professor Abdullah Mamun
- Associate Professor Wojtek Tomaszewski

OPERATIONAL PLAN 2020

To achieve our vision and mission to make meaningful difference to people’s lives by undertaking transformational research to solve critical social challenges, we need to act on our Strategic Plan Goals:

- Cultivate an enriching workplace culture
- Innovate, collaborate and influence for impact
- Deliver uncompromising quality in research and translation

To meet these goals our operational plan outlines the following activities that will be undertaken in 2020:

Ensure growth and sustainability

- Actively promote ISSR expertise and impact
- Target philanthropic and industry and partner funding
- Develop staff capability to enable growth
- Improve planning for new opportunities

Build stakeholder and partner value

- Build stakeholder and partner engagement
- Ensure quality project management and delivery
- Build and develop industry and partner training and knowledge sharing opportunities

Have effective and efficient processes

- Strengthen research partnership and development support
- Strengthen understanding of operations and administrative processes
- Strengthen internal and external communications
- Improve research management systems and processes

Develop and support our people

- Enable staff and career development and work-life balance
- Ensure HDR student quality experience and improve recruitment
- Demonstrate implementation of the UQ Reconciliation Action Plan including recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers
- Promote a positive workplace culture



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CREATE CHANGE

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