



ISSR NEWSLETTER

Quarter 2, 2020 Issue

[Student engagement as a mediator of the effects of socio-economic status on academic performance among secondary school students in Australia](#)

[Rewarding commitment to attend school: A field study with indigenous](#)

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear ISSR Stakeholders and friends

I am writing this to you from home. Like millions of Australians, ISSR staff have been working from home for over 7 weeks to support the efforts to curb the community reproduction of the COVID-19 virus. It has become a cliché to say these are unprecedented times, but as the pandemic continues researchers are beginning to understand its social, economic, and health impacts across a number of societies. A recent article in *The Atlantic* on the United States argues that no-one will be untouched by the virus, but the experiences of individuals, households, population groups, communities and regions will vary substantially. The pandemic will exacerbate existing inequalities, “fateful divides”, and expose political, economic, social and institutional vulnerabilities that allow the disease to spread and impede effective responses. Australia seems to be doing much better than many countries, but as I write this, preliminary analyses by the Australian Bureau of Statistics suggest that almost one million Australians have lost their jobs since social distancing started, with younger and older workers, and those working in accommodation and food services, arts and recreation, hardest hit.

[Australian High School students](#)

[Evaluation of the Beyond the Broncos Girls Academy Program](#)

[Global study finds almost one-third of school students bullied](#)

[Evaluation of a pilot parent engagement toolkit and training course for school staff and parents from socially disadvantaged schools](#)

[Caring about the carers: ISSR identifies strategies to support early childhood education and care workforce](#)

[Working with Social Ventures Australia to help great practice become common practice in education](#)

[ISSR Associate Professor leading the way in education equity research](#)

[Understanding the Social Impacts of COVID-19](#)

The virus has also highlighted who Australia's essential workers are – delivery drivers, supermarket employees, store and warehouse personnel, commercial cleaners, nurses, doctors, aged and disabled care workers, childcare workers, police, bank workers, school teachers, university lecturers and public servants. Many of those most affected by unemployment were economically vulnerable to begin with and many essential workers likewise experience jobs with insecure employment relationships, low pay, and poor working conditions. As with the United States, Australians will experience not a single pandemic, but many. Some people will be deeply and profoundly affected in ways that have enduring consequences. Others will experience more temporary disruptions and may even find elements of life under isolation that they would like to continue once restrictions lift. The diversity of experiences and impacts means it is important to begin broader conversations about how best to address coronavirus effects on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and also to ask questions about the kind of Australia we want to have, now and in the future with due consideration to issues like how do economy and society interrelate, what are the respective roles of government, the private sector and civil society, which elements of the pandemic response should we retain, do we just go back to life as usual before COVID-19 and so on? ISSR researchers are well placed to contribute to these conversations.

Despite the constraints placed on Universities and the ISSR researchers during the COVID-19 crisis, I am pleased to say our research teams have been continuing to pursue their research, and have adapted methods to enable us to continue to collect information and data despite no face to face contact. We have also been developing new research projects to investigate the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on communities and determine strategies for action to address the impacts. An outline of these various projects can be found on our website [here](#).

This year our newsletters are addressing each of the four impact areas identified in our new Strategic Plan (see [here](#) for more information about our Strategic plan). Our research examines **the social science of social policy and practice, health, education, and new innovation and technological advances** to make a meaningful difference to people's lives. This newsletter highlights the research we are undertaking to advance the social science of education for real-world benefit. Our teams are undertaking groundbreaking research to support better early childhood education for all; promote equity in education and stronger education pathways beyond secondary school; and show how schools create better practice to promote student learning and engagement, for example by supporting and enabling parental involvement with schools or new ways of engaging students at risk of poor school attendance.

I wish you all the best as we manage through this uncertain time.

Mark Western, Director ISSR

ISSR RESEARCH – SOCIAL SCIENCE OF EDUCATION

Student engagement as a mediator of the effects of socio-economic status on academic performance among secondary school students in Australia

The impact of family socio-economic status (SES) on students' academic performance has been extensively explored in the literature around the world. Accumulated empirical evidence shows that low SES students tend to



perform worse academically than their peers from more advantageous backgrounds globally including Australia. [Read more here](#)

Rewarding commitment to attend school: A field study with indigenous Australian High School students

There is clear evidence of a significant gap in education achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, with the Australian Government introducing its 'Closing the Gap' policy in 2008 partly to address inequality in education. [Read more here](#)



Evaluation of the Beyond the Broncos Girls Academy Program

Females of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent are considered the most disadvantaged and socially marginalised group in Australia today. Beginning in the early school years, there is clear evidence of a significant educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian female students. [Read more here](#)



Global study finds almost one-third of school students bullied

Adolescent boys from lower socio-economic backgrounds are most likely to be the victims of bullying, according to the first comprehensive study of school bullying around the world. [Read more here](#)



Evaluation of a pilot parent engagement toolkit and training course for school staff and parents from socially disadvantaged schools

Deep and persistent inequalities in the educational outcomes of children are of ongoing concern in Australia and as a result, schools are under a great deal of pressure to improve the learning outcomes of students, particularly those from socio-educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. [Read more here](#)



Caring about the carers: ISSR identifies strategies to support early childhood education and care workforce

Prior to the COVID19 crisis, key international agencies were advocating fiercely for improved access to early childhood education and care (ECEC). The UNICEF *State of the World's Children Report 2019* identified access to ECEC as a key distinguishing factor in education and lifetime outcomes for children internationally. [Read more here](#)



Working with Social Ventures Australia to help great practice become common practice in education

ISSR has been working with Social Ventures Australia to conduct a systematic review of the Australasian literature and develop oral language resources as part of the Evidence for Learning (E4L) Early Childhood Education Toolkit. [Read more here](#)



RESEARCH LEADER PROFILE

ISSR Associate Professor leading the way in education equity research

Associate Professor Wojtek Tomaszewski is Principal Research Fellow in Quantitative Methods and a Research Group Leader of the Education, Employment and Disadvantage Research Group at the Institute for Social Science Research. [Read more here](#)



OTHER UPDATES

Understanding the Social Impacts of COVID-19

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there have been significant changes taking place with regards to people's work, including where and how people work, and how they manage this with other responsibilities they have in their lives, such as their caregiving responsibilities, and other family and social obligations. In addition, many people have faced or are now facing the possibility that

they may have their work hours reduced, or may – at least temporarily – not be able to attend work for a period of time.

The purpose of this study is to understand some of the social impacts of COVID-19 on individuals and families in order to help direct resources and policies to where they are needed the most. In particular, the study focuses on the impacts of COVID-19 on families, including work and care situations, and how these situations have evolved and changed since the outbreak of the virus. This will be important in helping us understand more about how individuals and families are managing and coping with this current pandemic. [Please complete the survey here](#)



TRAINING AND EVENTS

2020 ISSR training schedule

ISSR aims to provide training opportunities for government, academic and industry professionals interested in using research methods and evidence based approaches to support the design, implementation and evaluation of research projects, policy and programs.

Short courses are available to both groups and individuals. For groups, the course content can be customised to meet your research training needs, and potentially include working on your research problems and data. Group courses can be held at your location or at [ISSR](#). To discuss group training options please contact issr.education@uq.edu.au.



[Download MFSAS Training Brochure](#)

[Download AIDA Flyer](#)

[See all upcoming course dates here](#)

HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH (HDR) OPPORTUNITIES

2021 UQ-Exeter Joint PhD Expression of Interest

The University of Queensland and the University of Exeter are seeking exceptional students to join a world-leading, cross-continental research team tackling major challenges facing the world's population in global sustainability and wellbeing as part of the [QUEX Institute](#).

The joint PhD scholarship program provides a fantastic opportunity for the most talented doctoral students to work closely with world class research groups and benefit from the combined expertise and facilities offered at the two institutions.

Ten generous, fully funded [scholarships](#) are available for the best applicants, five offered by the University of Queensland and five offered by the University of Exeter. This select group will have the chance to study in the UK and Australia, and will graduate with a joint degree from The University of Queensland and the University of Exeter.



ISSR researcher [Dr Anne Cleary](#) and colleague [Dr Ben Wheeler](#)'s (University of Exeter) project is entitled 'Climate change and mental health – exploring trends across Australia and the UK'.

Please forward on to potentially interested friends or colleagues and also check out our other [HDR research project opportunities](#).

Please share our newsletter with colleagues who may be interested.



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Maintained by: issr@uq.edu.au

