About Social Change and Wellbeing

The Strategic Research Program in Social Change and Wellbeing (SRP) is a new initiative to bring together 138 researchers to focus on contemporary global challenges to society and community wellbeing. The aim is to strengthen and focus collaboration between our eight participating social science research centres.

Our core objectives are to:

- Explore the nature of societal and individual wellbeing;
- Understand the reasons for trends and patterns in individual, family, community and societal wellbeing in post-industrialised societies; and
- Develop ways of improving wellbeing in Australia and internationally.

This newsletter highlights just a few of the research projects currently undertaken by the associated centres, but I encourage you to have a look at their websites to see the full areas of their expertise. Our website lists details of these centres, links to websites and academic profiles.

Looking forward to 2009, we are launching the SRP as a virtual institute on February 12, the Griffith Institute for Social and Behavioural Research. The occasion will be celebrated with a one-day conference centred around the theme of the good life, and the contribution of research to understanding, measuring and sharing the good life and community wellbeing. In 2009 we are also planning a series of research roundtables, to bring researchers together from different centres around big issues of common concern, as well as a series of training programs in statistics and qualitative research for research staff and PhD scholars.

**New look Website**

We have recently changed the look of our website. This site showcases major events, research projects and academic profiles from the associated centres. Logon and have a look around - any comments or suggestions would be welcomed.


**UK Statistician to start in December**

We are pleased to announce that the Strategic Research Program has employed a first rate statistician who will start with us in early December.

Dr Ayoub Saei, who will be moving to Brisbane from the UK with his family, holds a PhD in statistics from the Australian National University and an MSc in statistics from the University of New South Wales. Ayoub leaves a position as senior statistician in the Modelling and Bioinformatics Department, Centre for Infections, Health Protection Agency in the UK to join us. He will work with researchers and PhD scholars in data analysis, paper and grant writing, and training courses.
In May this year, the Australian Government established the Australian Social Inclusion Board. The Board has been asked to focus on the most disadvantaged geographic areas and communities in the nation and make recommendations on policy that could change the lifetime circumstances of jobless families and children at risk. Their website states that all Australians need to be able to play a full role in all aspects of Australian life. To be socially included, all Australians must be given the opportunity to:

- Secure a job;
- Access services;
- Connect with family, friends, work, personal interests and local community;
- Deal with personal crises; and
- Have their voices heard.

The Strategic Research Program was pleased to host a visit by several members of the Board in July. The Board requested a presentation on the Pathways to Prevention project. Amongst other things, they were interested to learn if the Pathways project could be implemented in remote Indigenous communities, which it certainly can. The delegation consisted of:

- Ms Patricia Faulkner (Chair)
- Ms Elleni Bereded-Samuel, Board Member
- Dr Ron Edwards, Board Member
- Ms Jacqui Malins, Director, Social Inclusion Unit, Dept. of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Ms Melanie Preuss, Assistant Director, Social Inclusion Unit, Dept. of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Some other examples of current research into social inclusion within the centres that comprise the SRP include:

**Cosmopolitanism, cultural citizenship and social inclusion**
*Chief Investigators: Professor Andy Bennett, Dr Ian Woodward, Dr Sarah Baker*

This study of young Australians examines the way attitudes of social tolerance, inclusion and the valuing of cultural difference relates to participation in popular culture, media and leisure. In the context of global cultures and the increased mobility of people and things, this study asks whether exposure to global media texts through music, film, gaming and the internet will lead to increased patterns of social participation and cultural tolerance.

It will address such questions as: do young people recognise the category of locally produced cultural goods, do they assign the local any value over the foreign, and what are the implications for Australian culture of the values they assign? Is this process making young Australians more or less culturally tolerant, and more or less culturally competent? Importantly, what will be the effects of shifting cultural consumption patterns for Australians and local culture? Do such global flows problematise a coherent notion of Australian identity among youth?

**Research Centre: Centre for Public Culture and Ideas, Director: Professor Andy Bennett (email: a.bennett@griffith.edu.au)**

**Enhancing mathematical learning for Indigenous students in remote communities**
*Chief Investigator: Professor Robyn Zevenbergen*

Equity outcomes for Indigenous students are decreasing. This project seeks to implement high quality, high demanding mathematics in a remote Indigenous community in the Kimberley. The project recognises that learning mathematics demands a cultural approach for students whose culture is not that of school mathematics. Using a design research approach, the project explores quality learning environments for students, teachers and Aboriginal education workers.

The project aims to develop sustainable practices in hard-to-staff regions that support high quality mathematics learning. The project will provide guidelines for development of rigorous and culturally-appropriate practices in mathematics with application across all equity contexts.

**Research Centre: Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Director: Professor Robyn Zevenbergen (email: r.zevenbergen@griffith.edu.au)**
Multi Disciplinary Themes

Through the Strategic Research Program researchers focus their disciplinary expertise in four core themes:

**Space and Place**
incorporates spatial analysis into a study of how social change affects people’s lives and the fortunes of places, including local communities
*Theme Leader:*
Associate Professor Scott Baum
s.baum@griffith.edu.au

**Pathways, Transitions and Interventions for Change**
is a program focused on the life-course, changing social contexts for human development, and preventative interventions.
*Theme Leader: Professor Ross Homel*
r.homel@griffith.edu.au

**Creativity and Social Inclusion**
addresses the importance of creative pursuits, including music, drama and dance, in personal and social skills development and as key resources in the facilitation of social inclusion and cultural participation.
*Theme Leader: Professor Andy Bennett*
a.bennett@griffith.edu.au

**Causes and Prevention of Violence**
explores the causes, consequences, and prospects for the control of violence in a period of change and social dislocation
*Theme Leader: Professor Paul Mazerolle*
p.mazerolle@griffith.edu.au

- Development of cross-disciplinary research projects
- Interdisciplinary sharing of research ideas
- Think tanks and conferences
- Books, major articles and other publications
- Links with industry
- Links with colleagues and centres outside Australia

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**Conférence**
“The Good Life…”
12 February 2009

A Conference on Social Change and Wellbeing to launch the Strategic Research Program as Griffith Institute for Social and Behavioural Research, will be held at the Queensland Conservatorium, South Bank, Brisbane. More details will be available soon from our website: www.griffith.edu.au/social-change

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If you would like information about the Strategic Research Program, or would like to be added to our mailing list please contact Susan Lockwood-Lee, tel: 07-3735 6996, email: s.lockwood-lee@griffith.edu.au
### Pathways, Transitions and Interventions for Change

**Developing Employee Resilience to Support Challenging Community and Human Service Roles.** Focuses on structures and processes to support the capacity of employees and future employees who undertake some of the most challenging and emotionally stressful community support roles. The project focuses upon state and NGO providers responsible for child safety, communities, corrections, legal aid, nursing, social work and teaching, adopting a dual ‘stream’.

Project contact: Dr Merrelyn Bates, m.bates@griffith.edu.au (Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance) and Associate Professor Peter Jordan, peter.jordan@griffith.edu.au (Centre for Work Organisation and Wellbeing).

More information about this theme and other research projects, contact Professor Ross Homel, r.homel@griffith.edu.au

### Space and Place

**Transit-oriented development in South East Queensland.** A three year project to investigate transit-oriented developments in South East Queensland. Transit-oriented development creates mixed-use, higher density communities that encourage people to live near transit services and decrease their dependence on driving. The research will support the effective design and implementation of the South East Queensland Regional Plan.

Project contact: Dr Neil Sipe, n.sipe@griffith.edu.au

More information about this theme and other research projects, contact Associate Professor Scott Baum, s.baum@griffith.edu.au

### Causes and Prevention of Violence

**Developmental Pathways to Intimate Partner Homicide: Understanding Individual and Situational Dimensions**

Intimate partner homicide is a serious public health and safety issue. This project will have several benefits. The findings will extend understanding of pathways leading to partner homicide, and will contribute to improved decision making models by police and social welfare agencies. Additionally, the findings will inform victims of partner violence of risks related to escalation toward fatal outcomes and should facilitate help seeking behaviour. Collectively, project findings should expand understanding, improve service delivery and save lives.

Project contact: Professor Paul Mazerolle, p.mazerolle@griffith.edu.au

### Creativity and Social Inclusion

**Creative for Life.** This program seeks creative approaches to issues facing our ageing society, and takes a fresh look at creativity and healthy living across all ages and cultures and celebrates creative processes and the ways they enrich our communities. Creative for Life is developing new ways to link Griffith excellence in interdisciplinary research and creativity with government and community in Queensland. Building on Griffith University strengths and resources, Creative for Life brings together expertise and skills from the creative arts, humanities and life sciences.

Project contact: Professor Anna Haebich, a.haebich@griffith.edu.au

More information about this theme and other research projects, contact Professor Andy Bennett, a.bennett@griffith.edu.au

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**Community Indicators Queensland**

Building upon the successful Community Indicators Victoria model, and with guidance from Professor John Wiseman at the University of Melbourne, the Strategic Research Program is supporting a project to develop a set of non-economic based indicators to assist policymakers, researchers and the public to evaluate and improve community wellbeing. Working with colleagues from a range of state, commonwealth and local government agencies the project aims to contribute to improvement in the life and wellbeing of Queenslanders, with a model informed by national and international research and practice tailored to reflect the diversity and unique character of our state. The project is being led by Associate Professor Geoff Woolcock from the Urban Research Program (g.woolcock@griffith.edu.au)

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**The Pathways to Prevention Project**

An ongoing partnership between Mission Australia, and the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance. Pathways is based on the assumption that mobilising social resources to support children, families and their communities before problems emerge is more effective and cheaper than intervening when problems have become entrenched. The key is to work early in the developmental pathways, which does not necessarily mean early in life. Project contact: Dr Kate Freiberg, k.freiberg@griffith.edu.au

More information about this theme and other research projects, contact Professor Ross Homel, r.homel@griffith.edu.au