



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Research for
Social Change

Research for Social Change is a centre for values-based social science about health and wellbeing in the Faculty of Social Science at the University of Wollongong.

We make research matter by asking what matters to people, and why.

We aim to understand, explain and make arguments about the political and ethical challenges that can enhance or undermine health and wellbeing for individuals, communities, and society. Our work connects our local region with the globe, and the academic arena with other social worlds. Research impact and public engagement are central to what we do.

WHAT CHARACTERISES OUR RESEARCH?

We take a lifecourse approach. Many of our projects focus on human wellbeing at a particular time of life: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, or older years. In different projects we are working with children about healthy relationships, with young people about their sense of place, and with adults about their parenting practices.

We care about the diversity of people's experiences and perspectives. We are working with Aboriginal people, with socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, with recent migrants, with people with disabilities, with scientists and health professionals, with people who refuse vaccination for their children, and with people who own or work with animals. In our view, to understand people's actions we need to understand their perspectives on the world, their sense of self, the groups they belong to, their values, and their judgements about what's right and wrong. We explore both the universal and the particular in human experience.

We are centrally interested in people, but we always situate people in context. The institutions and technological systems we live and work in, our relationships with the environment and with other animals, the social groups we identify with and the social networks we spend time in: all of these help to make sense of who we are and how we act. There is a recursive relationship between us and the contexts in which we live: these social and technological contexts affect our wellbeing, and we in turn change the world around us. We pay attention to this relationship in everything we do.

We see health and wellbeing as ethical and political challenges. Asking about health and wellbeing means asking questions about good and bad, right and wrong. Health and wellbeing are both products and drivers of the way society is resourced, organised and governed. So exploring health and wellbeing often means asking difficult questions about what we should do, and seeking to find legitimate and well-justified answers to those questions.

We are methodologists. Our particular strengths are in creative and arts based methods, qualitative and ethnographic methods, deliberative methods, and methods for empirical ethics research.

OUR WORK IS ORGANISED INTO FOUR THEMES:



Social Determinants of Human Wellbeing

How can social arrangements support human wellbeing?

The societies, communities and relationships in which we live affect our health and wellbeing in many ways: they can support or undermine our autonomy, enhance or limit the opportunities available to us, and shape our habits. Our projects often engage directly with the social determinants of wellbeing. For example: we are using arts-based methods to support one disadvantaged neighbourhood to publicly express their shared identity, as a way of resisting stigmatising narratives and telling their own story.



Technologies & Human Wellbeing

How should people develop and use technology?

Technology can increase or decrease human wellbeing, depending on the explicit and tacit decisions that humans make about its design and use. We are both shaping technology—for example contributing to the design of a house to support people with dementia—and critiquing our relationship with technology, in areas including antimicrobial resistance and overdiagnosis through medical screening.



Other Species & Human Wellbeing

How should people relate to other animals?

Human lives are interconnected with the lives of other animals. We bring animals into our homes as pets, work with them in agricultural and other industries, and encounter them where they live. Our projects about other animals include: community juries about managing Hendra virus (which is passed from bats to horses and then to people), and research about dogs in remote Aboriginal communities.



Methodological Development

Innovative methods for research on social and ethical issues

Our research often includes a methodological component. Projects include an examination of how best to bring members of communities together to deliberate about difficult ethical and political issues, how to best use the results of our research to inform decisions about what ought to be done, and how to design our research to increase its impact.

OUR CORE TEAM



Prof Stacy Carter Director

With a background in public health and expertise in qualitative and deliberative methods and public health ethics, Stacy's work addresses contested or counterintuitive public health problems including overdiagnosis and vaccine refusal.



A/Prof Kate Senior Associate Professor of Medical Anthropology

Kate's work uses creative, ethnographic and community development methods to explain, support and increase wellbeing in young people, Aboriginal communities and marginalised communities.



Dr Chris Degeling Senior Research Fellow

With a background in science and technology studies and veterinary medicine, and expertise in qualitative, deliberative and philosophical methods, Chris focuses on OneHealth, including antimicrobial resistance and the relationship between humans and other animals.



Kishan Kariippanon Research Fellow

A design anthropologist with a background in medicine and social marketing, Kishan's work focuses on how design choices can enhance human wellbeing in areas including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, the health of older people, and suicide prevention.

OUR PHD SCHOLARS

Research for Social Change PhD scholars and their research topics include:

Laura **Grozdanovski**: Researching with young people

Julie **Hall**: Universities and community engagement

Tajmmal **Kabir**: Pakistani families living in the Illawarra

Ratchakorn **Kaewpramkusol**: Alcohol promotion in Thailand

Zhuzhu **Liu**: Spontaneous volunteers after natural disasters

Catherine **Moyle**: Art practices and Aboriginal identity

Cheryl **Travers**: Companion animals and emergency services

CONTACTS

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