

# SWIRLS

## SOCIAL WORK INNOVATION RESEARCH LIVING SPACE



### Welcome

Welcome to SWIRLS, the Social Work Innovation Research Living Space. SWIRLS is a leading national social work research centre. We are comprised of a group of social workers and social science researchers who investigate real world social issues and social work practice to come up with innovative insights, advancements in theories and best practice recommendations for policy and practice. We're developing a formidable reputation for producing theoretically driven research to examine social issues and social work practice in our ever-evolving world.

Our current research projects include investigations into:

- Child Protection
- Domestic and Family Violence
- Decolonisation
- Children and Young People
- Family Well-being
- Disability

Social work judgement and decision-making social workers seek knowledge through understanding the perspectives and experiences of the people with whom we work, as well as the structural, social and institutional contexts for individual lives. We deal with complex problems that need nuanced, evidence-based responses. In doing so, we embrace innovation, creativity, risktaking, collaboration and fresh perspectives.

The evidence that we produce through our partnerships with agencies enables social workers to respond effectively to the issues facing our communities.

We welcome people to our team who are committed and aligned with our team values.



SWIRLS Director, Professor Sarah Wendt

### About this handbook

The content of this handbook is intended to provide an introduction and a guide to the SWIRLS Research Centre and our operating procedures. This handbook will assist in defining important policies and outlining the purpose of the Social Work Innovation Research Living Space.

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Ninna Marni

We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we work and pay our respects to First Nations Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

We recognise the past atrocities against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this land and that Australia was founded on the genocide and dispossession of First Nations people. We acknowledge that colonial structures and policies remain in place today and recognise the ongoing struggles of First Nations people in dismantling those structures.

We acknowledge the intellectual property of our First Nations partners and recognise that our research would not be possible without their cultural authority and leadership.

Adapted from source <https://acij.org.au/about-us/acknowledgement-of-country/>



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## Who is SWIRLS?

SWIRLS is a Research Centre approved by Flinders University Academic Senate. SWIRLS is a unique and innovative concept, driven by practice-led social work researchers based at Flinders University.

SWIRLS represents an environment of respectful collegiality in which diverse expertise, strengths, perspectives and bodies of knowledge are both valued and inform our work. It is a space in which people, groups and organisations can come together to explore critical and pressing issues, large or small.

SWIRLS members value relationships - with people, groups, and organisations - above all else. Working in partnership with others is both our goal and our methodology. We believe that meaningful interactions, mutual learning, open and honest exchange, and common goals are of central importance; that the whole is stronger than its parts.

SWIRLS members are committed to making a difference by never losing sight of our obligation to challenge structural inequalities. We are interested in research that 'means something', that makes a 'real' contribution to social justice, that has an impact in the 'real' world and in the lives of vulnerable people.

SWIRLS aim is to be the research centre of choice; the one that industry wants to work with because we 'get it'! In our approach to partnership, we prioritise innovation, flexibility, listening, co-design and the co-creation of knowledge, systems, and practice.

SWIRLS is committed to centring practice and practitioners and to embracing complexity by engaging in inquiry that both critically examines existing theory and knowledge and builds new understandings by generating knowledge from practice.



## Our Team

**Director:** Professor Sarah Wendt

**Full Members:** Dr Carmela Bastian, Associate Professor Kris Natalier, Dr Kate Seymour, Dr Michelle Jones, Associate Professor Lorna Hallahan, Donna Quinn, Dr Ben Lohmeyer, Luke Cantley, Associate Professor Catherine Kevin, Professor Sally Robinson, Professor Gerry Redmond, Professor Debra Bateman, Dr Lana Zannettino, Dr Alhassan Abdullah

**Associate Members:** Paula Redpath, Dr Josephine Clarke, Nicola Trenorden, Dr Georgia Rowley, Dr Sharon Goudie, Chris Reynolds, Donna Quinn, Daniel Quinn, Ali Elder

**Affiliate Members:** Mia Mandara

**Student Members:** Tessa Cunningham, Samantha Laver, Amy Bromley, Lida Shams, Jin Chen, Isabelle Hermes, Roxana Diamond, Jade Yim-Moore, Sharon Meagher

**Senior Research Support Officer:** Hayley Anderson

To find out more about our team please visit <https://www.flinders.edu.au/swirls/who-we-are>

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## Our Mission

The world is a whirlpool of information, theories, opinions and facts. We take the spin out, concentrate on research that uses evidence and lived experience, and create innovative solutions in and around social work.

Our goal is to advance social work, policy and research by doing things differently.



We bring together researchers, practitioners, policy people, advocates, and service-users to co-design projects. It's not your typical academia. We're transgressing the lines drawn between us to bring a fresh perspective to complex problems and the solutions they need. This way, we get to know what's happening 'on the ground' and to understand what matters to the people who are there.

Our work is interdisciplinary, and we are adaptable and responsive.

Our research environment is informed by appreciative inquiry and participatory action research. We offer evidence that is both informed by and promotes social justice values, contributing to a strong, capable and resilient workforce.

We are interested in better prevention, intervention and services. We contribute to policy and practice. We educate and mentor future generations of social workers. And we help to shape practice with individuals, families and communities that is skilled, purposeful, and makes a difference.

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## Our Vision

We love our active research culture. Operating in real-life environments, we have a practice-driven space that facilitates collaboration and open innovation to tackle complex challenges.

SWIRLS is a place for us to co-create research. We make meaningful connections between research, social work and policy in the field and conduct our work in a rapidly changing world. Instead of academics driving research outcomes, we work with practitioners and policy experts to co-design projects that have an impact.

SWIRLS is not a building. It is an ever-changing space. A space defined by the people who create it.

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## Our Aims and Objectives

SWIRLS aims to generate new evidence and research to support policy and practice development across the fields of social work, as well as assisting to translate existing evidence into policy and practice.

Our key objectives are to:

- build the evidence base for improved service design, prevention and intervention in social work fields of practice
- facilitate the role of research in informing and changing policy and practice
- inform workforce development and the education and training of future social workers
- enable mentoring opportunities across practice and academia to build a culture of learning, innovation, and reflective practice in service systems
- improve the experience and outcomes for individuals, families, groups, and communities engaged with social work
- be nationally recognised for excellence in social work research that focuses on innovation and practice outcomes



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## Strategic Intent

The Social Work Innovation Research Living Space aims to be a national leader in social work research, producing evidence-based contributions to engagement and impact that benefit the profession and the community, increases research income and high-quality outputs and improves the FoR 1607 (Social Work) ERA ranking.



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## Our Partners

SWIRLS is formed around the goals of collaboration, partnerships and open innovation to tackle complex social problems with social workers, human service workers and governments. Research in partnership with industry brings together applied research excellence, the practice wisdom and field-based knowledge of social workers, and the lived experiences and insights of individuals, families, groups and communities.

### SWIRLS Research Partners

- Department for Child Protection
- Department of Human Services
- Early Intervention Research Directorate
- Emerging Minds
- Guardian for Children and Young People
- Housing SA
- KWY Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Services
- Parenting Research Centre
- Uniting Communities
- Women's Safety Services SA
- ANROWS
- Anglicare SA
- Lutheran Church Australia
- Adelaide Mosque Islamic Society of SA



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## International Partnerships

SWIRLS Collaborates with International Partners to co-create collaborative international social work and social care research and innovation links and networks. SWIRLS partnership with the Centre for Social Work Innovation and Research (CSWIR), located within the School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex aims to:

- Share knowledge about the two Centres' existing research and innovation activities
- Develop collaborative working practices with service users, social work practitioners and service providers, policymakers, social academics, and students in order to promote and co-produce research and innovation activities across, and within, the Centres
- Ensure that the voices of marginalised and oppressed groups have a central role in co-creating all our activities
- Promote knowledge exchange activities, informed by a triadic model of knowledge production - knowledge from lived experience, practice, and research; which places equal value on each knowledge source
- Generate research and innovation impact to improve social work practice, policy, and education
- Strengthen the interface of social work research and innovation with social work practice and education



## SNAPSHOT OF FUNDING WITH INDUSTRY PARTNERS

### Australian Research Council (ARC) Nationally Competitive Grants

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#### **Strengthening Australia's Domestic and Family Violence Workforce - ARC Discovery with Australian Research Council**

This project seeks to investigate the nature of domestic and family violence (DFV) work and what this means for strengthening and planning for Australia's domestic and family violence workforce. The project aims to generate a coherent, qualitative evidence base on the nature and experiences of DFV work across victim services, perpetrator services and Aboriginal specialist services and conceptualise the DFV workforce with reference to the nature of the work across these domains. Research will recommend workforce development strategies that are responsive to the context and needs of DFV.

#### **A home centred approach to supporting young people in state care - ARC Linkage with Department for Child Protection, Anglicare SA and Life Without Barriers**

This project is driven by a compelling question: What does home mean to children and young people in state care? The research aims to determine how understandings of home enhance children and young people's experiences in state care, support carers to respond to children and young people's needs and to develop home-centred principles and practice guidelines for organisations providing state care.

#### **Religion and domestic violence: exploring men's perpetration - ARC Linkage with Lutheran Church of Australia**

We are working with the Lutheran Church of Australia generating new knowledge about how religious beliefs and practices are used by men to perpetrate domestic violence. Using a qualitative design this project will gain insights into how churches understand and respond to domestic violence, and identify and analyse the perpetration of spiritual abuse as a form of domestic violence. The significant innovation and benefit are interviewing Australian men about their understandings and use of violence through an ecclesiastical lens. The outcomes will enhance the knowledge base of domestic violence theory, serving as a platform to develop more effective policies and practice inside and outside religious settings to prevent domestic violence.

#### **Confronting everyday harms: preventing abuse of people with disability - ARC Linkage with Australian Research Council**

The findings of the Disability Royal Commission necessitate new approaches to prevent violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Framed by recognition theory, this project will develop empirical research with young people with cognitive disability, using a new concept of 'everyday harms' in their paid relationships. The results will inform early responses to poor quality interactions in disability support. The strategic alliances with the government, industry and community partners will develop a practice framework to prevent everyday harms and the escalation to abuse, and to promote safety and wellbeing. The research has policy benefits for capacity-building in the sector to act on the rights and voices of people with disability.

To view all SWIRLS projects and partnerships, please visit <https://www.flinders.edu.au/swirls/partnerships-and-projects>



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## Governance

SWIRLS is hosted by the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work (EPSW) and reports, through the Director, to the Vice President Executive Dean as well as to the Academic Senate through the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research.

The Director is Professor Sarah Wendt. The Director leads the research agenda of SWIRLS, manages membership (based on research performance measures), supervises the administration and operations of the centre, leads and grows research partnerships, and communicates to the field.

The Senior Research Support Officer supports the governance and strategic direction of SWIRLS, which aligns with oversight of financial management, partnerships and engagement, research management, project management, infrastructure as well as marketing and recruitment activities. The position also has oversight of the administration and operations of the centre.

SWIRLS meetings are held on a 6 weekly cycle to drive the key objectives for the strategic plan. Meetings are conducted with a set agenda and actions and decisions are recorded.



## SWIRLS Advisors

SWIRLS engages with Advisors for review, comment and feedback, to ensure our research agenda remains relevant to the needs of the sector. Advisors are consulted throughout the year, with formal meetings held annually.

### Flinders University Advisory Representatives

Flinders University Advisory Representatives include the College Vice President Executive Dean, the Dean of Research for the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work and the Director of SWIRLS.

### External Advisors

External Advisors include key stakeholders from industry representing key social work fields:

- KWY
- Women's Safety Services SA
- Ninko
- Department for Child Protection SA
- Department Human Services SA
- Early Intervention Research Directorate

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## SWIRLS Membership

SWIRLS fosters internal and external collaboration and encourages high-quality applied social work research. Its members are provided with a unified and streamlined approach to research that facilitates communication and the effective use of University resources.

SWIRLS Membership is open to Social Work Academics in the College and post-doctoral fellows (embedded in grant applications). Student (PhD and Honours) Membership is also available.

Members from outside university and the Social Work discipline that meet the research expectations and support the SWIRLS partnership approach are also welcome.



## Membership Definitions

There are four levels of membership of SWIRLS:

- **Full Members:** Flinders University staff and academic status holders, who are engaged in research activities relevant to the Centre, who meet the research performance standards criteria set by the Dean (Research) of the host College in consultation with the SWIRLS Director.
- **Associate Members:** Flinders University staff and post-doctoral fellows (embedded in grant applications), who do not currently meet the criteria for full membership but are deemed to be potential contributors to the centre.
- **Affiliate Members:** Partners who contribute to the centre.
- **Student Members:** HDR candidates enrolled at Flinders University who are supervised by SWIRLS Members or Associate Members and/or whose research is relevant to the Centre. Honours students enrolled at Flinders University who are supervised by SWIRLS Members or Associate Members and whose research is relevant to the centre.

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## Membership Principles

In planning outputs, SWIRLS members should aim for: a) FoR code 1607 (ERA); and b) high quality outlets (publishers, journals). Where both a) and b) are not possible, high quality (b) should always be prioritised over FoR (a).

In deciding to work with other universities, research centres, disciplines, etc. SWIRLS members should be clear and upfront about their SWIRLS affiliation and aim to negotiate issues such as co-badging and funding (to come through SWIRLS) at the earliest opportunity.

Where members identify potential partnerships/projects, they should initially approach the Director. These will be presented to the SWIRLS membership, as/if they progress, via the SWIRLS regular meeting.

SWIRLS encourages supportive and collegial working relationships with an emphasis on mutual learning, professional development and capacity building. All members are therefore encouraged to take opportunities to lead projects, particularly those involving Category 1 grants and related publications.

The success and sustainability of SWIRLS relies on industry reputation; industry partners are our priority.

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## Membership Responsibilities

To be accountable to SWIRLS as a whole and to the members of one's own project team by:

- participating in formal meetings and contributing to other discussions, decision-making, etc. as the need arises.
- consistently attending meetings (and advising if unable to attend).
- engaging in discussion and negotiation of contributions in line with the changing demands/priorities of projects.
- individual members clearly communicating what they can and cannot contribute to a project.
- prioritising SWIRLS research by ensuring that deadlines are met and all parties (team, industry partner, etc) are kept informed of progress.
- demonstrating commitment to a collaborative approach by recognising the diverse skills and knowledge brought by different members.
- proactively seeking opportunities for research partnerships, SWIRLS projects, and (co) publications.
- sharing research expertise in the interests of collaboration and high-quality research outcomes.
- ensuring the Director is provided with all relevant information (regarding publications, etc.) for the purpose of KPI reporting.

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## Director Role and Responsibilities

The Director is responsible for representing SWIRLS at the University and College levels.

The Director will:

- Lead the development of SWIRLS aims and mission and policies.
- Take carriage of growing external stakeholder relationships.
- Have oversight of all interactions with (external) stakeholders with respect both to projects and program teams (i.e. building teams). In initiating discussions with potential industry partners, members should aim to involve the Director at an early stage to ensure university/SWIRLS focus.
- Lead communication with the external group/s overseeing SWIRLS.
- Develop and oversee research directions and impact and outreach strategies.
- Identify funding opportunities and identify teams to apply for those opportunities.
- Report on the activities of SWIRLS as required by University processes.
- Be responsible for SWIRLS compliance with relevant institutional processes, requirements etc.
- Chair SWIRLS meetings.
- Report on matters of relevance to SWIRLS membership as required.
- Mentor and support SWIRLS members in developing research track records and professional goals.
- Ensure that relevant information is communicated to SWIRLS members and that members are involved in discussion and decision making via the formal meetings.





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## Deputy Director Role and Responsibilities

The role of Deputy Director within SWIRLS is currently vacant.

Upon appointment, the Deputy Director will work with the Director to ensure the stability and sustainability of SWIRLS, including sharing knowledge in order to avoid 'single point of failure'. The Deputy Director may also take on specific tasks and/or sub-portfolios as required.

The Deputy Director will work with the Director to ensure the stability and sustainability of SWIRLS. They will:

- Share operational knowledge to avoid 'single point of failure'.
- Collaborate with the director in the development of external stakeholder relationships.
- Advise on the development of SWIRLS' aims and mission and policies.
- Advise on and develop research directions and impact and outreach strategies.
- Identify funding opportunities and identify teams to apply for those opportunities.
- Take on specific tasks and/or sub-portfolios as required.
- Mentor and support SWIRLS members in developing research track record and professional goals.

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## Appointment and tenure of Director and Deputy Director

The Director (and Deputy Director, where appointed) facilitate SWIRLS stability and the development of long-term relationships and strategic directions. Directors will be appointed for 4 years. There is no limit to number of terms a Director can fulfil the role.

The Deputy Director tenure is under review and not currently defined.

The Director will be appointed by the committee consisting of the College Vice President and Executive Dean, College Deans of Teaching, Research and People and Culture, The DVCR, a representative from another College and an external stakeholder.

The Deputy Director will be appointed by a Committee consisting of College Vice President and Executive Dean, College Deans of Teaching, Research and People and Culture, and the Director.



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## Research Environment Statement

Social Work Innovation Research Living Space (SWIRLS) was established to work with community, government and industry stakeholders to generate solutions to complex policy and practice challenges facing government, community and industry stakeholders and limiting the lives of Australia's most vulnerable citizens. The relevance and impact of SWIRLS research is strengthened through principles of collaboration and open innovation with stakeholders. SWIRLS offers environments in which user-centred innovation processes can be studied and assessed for impact. Informed by this approach, SWIRLS research is co-designed with partners to incorporate applied research excellence, field-based knowledge and the lived experiences of clients.

This approach underpins partnerships with stakeholders including the South Australian Guardian for Children and Young People, Department for Child Protection (SA), Women's Safety Services SA, KWKY Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Services, and the Early Intervention Research Directorate, Housing SA and Youth Justice – all located within the South Australian Department of Human Services. It also drives the design and implementation of Category 1 funded research, which has been primarily developed through ANROWS and ARC (Discovery and Linkage) projects.

SWIRLS values its relationships with an extensive network of community organisations and industry agencies that have participated in research projects. This network facilitates timely data collection, testing findings and recommendations, and uptake of research outcomes.

The reach and impact of SWIRLS research is increased through its networks.

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## Grants

In preparing grant applications, SWIRLS members must include:

- a clear statement of expectations, roles and responsibilities of project team members; and administrative costs for SWIRLS, i.e. levy for Manager position/duties.
- Budgets/costing:  
Aim for \$150,000 + p.a.
- Carefully negotiate budget and be sure to cost and factor in researchers' time and skills (don't undervalue).
- As a general rule, slightly overestimate cost/time.
- If one person chooses to take on a higher proportion of the work in a project, ensure that adequate funding is allocated for their time.
- 40-40-20 rule applies for contribution to post-doc supervision.
- Because SWIRLS members are responsible for managing their own research workload, it will generally make sense to aim for bigger grants (0.2FTE/0.5FTE). Note that the bottom line for all SWIRLS projects is to ensure that commitments to funders are met.

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## Project Leadership

The responsibilities associated with being named as the lead investigator on a grant are:

- To act as the lynch-pin for the project and key contact person for the agency/partner. This means maintaining regular contact with both the agency and the project team to ensure they are kept updated on project progress, milestones, etc.
- Take intellectual carriage for the project.
- Overall responsibility for contract management, both with the university and the agency/partner.
- Oversee the project including risk management, planning, time-management, and task progress as well as keeping track of spending and budget considerations. This includes ensuring that products – such as the final report – are provided to the partner agency on time.
- Facilitate the negotiation of, and decision-making concerning, the roles, responsibilities and specific contributions of team members at all stages of the project (from the grant writing stage through to final reporting).
- Meet regularly with the project team members and ensure that they are both supported and informed of progress, changes, issues, etc.
- Take responsibility for trouble shooting and problem-solving when/as required.
- Act as the central point for media coverage and other public communication of project findings.
- Ensure the project fulfils expectations regarding data security and ethics compliance.
- Regularly report on the project / progress at SWIRLS meetings.



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## Post Docs and PhDs

The SWIRLS goal regarding post-docs is that they be moved into continuing academic positions, and away from 'soft money', at the earliest opportunity.

It is a SWIRLS priority to increase the number of PhD students by identifying and supporting potential PhDs. The introduction of a stipend for PhD students should also be considered. This will require careful negotiations regarding roles, tasks, and timelines.

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## Authorship

SWIRLS principles regarding authorship:

- Author names on publications should be listed in order of relative contribution to the paper. This means that the first-named author is recognised as the major contributor.
- Discussions regarding authorship should occur early and agreements/decisions clearly communicated. Partnership organisations/bodies should never be left to guess about this.
- Supervisors of PhDs should engage students in ongoing discussion regarding matters such as collegiality, establishing track record and career building as well as encouraging students to publish throughout. Note that the student should always be named as the first author on joint publications.
- Further information on collaborative research with industry can be found on the NHMRC website <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/>
- Further information on Aboriginal research can be found in the [South Australian Aboriginal Health Research Accord](https://sahmri.blob.core.windows.net/communications/sahmriresearch.org/companion_document_accordfinal.pdf) [https://sahmri.blob.core.windows.net/communications/sahmriresearch.org/companion\\_document\\_accordfinal.pdf](https://sahmri.blob.core.windows.net/communications/sahmriresearch.org/companion_document_accordfinal.pdf)
- Further information on authorship can be found on the [Flinders University research policies webpage](https://www.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/documents/staff/policies/research/authorship-of-research-output-procedures.pdf) <https://www.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/documents/staff/policies/research/authorship-of-research-output-procedures.pdf>

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## **NEED MORE INFORMATION?**

### **VISIT US**

#### **The Social Work Innovation Research Living Space is located at:**

Flinders University  
Sturt Road, Bedford Park SA 5042  
Social Sciences South Building, Level 3, Room 349

### **CONTACT US**

#### **SWIRLS Senior Research Support Officer**

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