Research Projects and Grants
Department of Social Work

Criminal Justice Research Consortium

Currently CJRC members are involved in the following funded research projects:

- 2011: ARC Linkage Project grant: Collaborative Family Work in Youth Justice: 
  A model for reducing recidivism in young offenders
- 2011: ARC Linkage Project grant: The Impact of Incarceration on Children’s Care: 
  A Strategic Framework for Good Care Planning
- 2010: Legal Services Board (Vic) Major Grant: An examination of the impact of unpaid fines on disadvantaged groups and the criminal justice system - towards a best practice model
- 2010: ARC Linkage Project grant: Ageing in prison: A strategic framework for the management of ageing offenders in the Australian criminal justice system

ARC Discovery Grant

Associate Professor Rosemary Sheehan has been awarded, with Professor Allan Borowski (LaTrobe University) an ARC Discovery Grant 2009-10 for a national study of Australia’s Children’s Courts, entitled: Challenges, possibilities and future directions: a national assessment of Australia’s Children’s Courts ($580,000)

Helen MacPherson Smith Trust, 2008-09
Associate Professor Philip Mendes

The report from participant interviews in this project is now available - see From Dependence to Independence

Dr Philip Mendes: “Examining the support needs and pathways of young people leaving state care in rural Victoria” in partnership with St Lukes Anglicare. Helen MacPherson Smith Trust, an independent philanthropic trust ($75,000)

The goal of this research is to attain detailed information on the life circumstances of young people who have recently left care in rural and regional and urban Victoria (with a particular emphasis on indigenous care leavers) by exploring their perspectives and insights. We aim to:

1) Examine the key factors that have influenced the outcomes (positive and negative) for care leavers including particularly the post-care services accessed by the care leavers;

2) Explore the extent to which the services accessed are perceived by care leavers as meeting their needs with a particular emphasis on examining the outcomes of the Employment and Mentoring program introduced by St Lukes in August 2007; and

3) To identify barriers to accessing post-care services and gaps in service provision in rural areas.
**Attorney-General's Family Violence and Family Law Research Grant**

Professor Thea Brown won a grant from the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department in April 2009. The research is to be conducted between members of the Well Being of Children Following Parental Separation and Divorce Research Consortium and the Hawke Research Institute Uni SA with the aim of exploring how families with past or current experiences of family violence are managing in the new socio-legal family law services system following the changes introduced by the 2006 family law legislation. Professor Thea Brown and Associate Professor Dale Bagshaw (Uni SA) are co-directors of the project for the tender of $300,000. The project will run for one year.

**Health & Mental Health Research Group**

This group is convened by Associate Professor Fiona McDermott and comprises members of the social work department, RHD students, and interested field-based social work colleagues and practitioners doing research in the following areas within the health & mental health fields:

- Hospital-based health care
- Community health
- Clinical mental health
- Psychiatric disability
- Rural health
- Rural mental health
- Women and mental health
- Trauma – sexual assault & family violence

Group participants might have an interest in:

- Development of social work theory especially in relation to person-in-environment
- Working with complex systems
- Transdisciplinary practice/research
- Practitioner research
- Evidence based practice

**GLASS Research Unit**

**Gendered Impacts of Climate-change Induced Disasters in Bangladesh.**

Funded by Oxfam-Monash Partnership

The central research aim of this project is to assess the gender-based impacts related to catastrophic climate events and capture and learn from the experiences and vulnerability of women in post-disaster situations to determine appropriate and practical ways to address this issue.

While the international community and researchers have been developing knowledge about the gendered impacts of climate disasters and the issues of primary concern to women so affected there is still much to be learned. Women are often the most vulnerable during disasters. Their vulnerability is linked with the inequitable power relations between women and men, the different abilities of humans, and with their identities in the societies in which they live. Therefore, unless gender and diversity is made an integral part of emergency response, assistance may not reach the most deserving and ensure their right to live with dignity.
Bangladesh is now recognised as one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. The country’s leading climatologist Atiq Rahman, Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies, suggests that with tens of millions of people living no more than 30 feet above sea level, Bangladesh is at ground zero for global warming. It is being hit from the south by cyclones and from the north by rivers increasingly swollen by melting glaciers in the Himalayas.

A range of factors such as over-population, social inequality, escalated environmental degradation and rapid urbanization is considerably increasing the impact of disasters on human health and survival in the country, creating the need for a more complex emergency response. Moreover, the economic burden of poverty and demographic pressures are making a vast majority of people more vulnerable by forcing them to migrate to high risk areas such as flood plains and far flung islands which are normally not suitable for human settlement.

At the same time, the country is at risk of being inundated. Predictions suggest that at least ten percent of its land mass may disappear within the first half of this century due to rising sea levels as a result of climate change.

This research project will articulate the extent and conditions that exacerbate the issue of gender based impacts of disasters and the findings and suggested mechanisms to address the issue will be presented in ways that can inform and contribute to a further development of Oxfam’s approach and also their partners and other NGO’s providing support for humanitarian and development work.

**IMPACTS OF DECLINING WATER ON WOMEN’S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.**

Funded by Monash University, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences Strategic Grant.

The aim of this research is to examine the impacts on women in rural communities that have been affected by changes in water availability because of ongoing severe drought and in some instances because of reduced water availability due to changes in water policy in the Murray-Darling Basin.

The proposed research will examine the health and well-being impacts to women in one or more localities in Northern Victoria. The proposed research will initially focus on the Mildura and Sunraysia region and will extend to another Northern Victorian region if required as the project progresses (if further data collection is deemed necessary). Semi-structured in-depth interviews will be undertaken with women’s health and welfare service providers in the locality/ies. The interviews will explore the ways rural women’s health and well-being is being affected in association with changes to water availability. The interviews will also explore respondents’ perceptions about current and future needs for services to the target group of rural women.
Understanding Gender and Climate Change in the Pacific.
Funded by UNESCO

This preliminary research report outlines the likely gendered impacts of climate change in the Pacific Island region. It is based on secondary data analysis as well as a number of informal interviews with key informants.

Drug and alcohol use by farming and fishing workers.

In collaboration with the Lyndon Community, Charles Sturt University and the University of New South Wales. Funded by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

This project investigates farm and fishing workers' use of drugs and alcohol, identifying any effects on their physical and mental health and links these to workplace health and safety. The project will address a cross-sectoral (health and industry) topic and develop knowledge to meet the needs of industry, community and government.

The project will identify farm and fishing workers' knowledge, perceptions and use of drugs and alcohol, their experiences of drug and alcohol related harms (physical and mental), the influence of workplace culture on drug and alcohol use and avenues for dissemination of educational information to industry. A mixed methods approach (qualitative and quantitative methods) will be applied to:

- Assess the extent of drug and alcohol use amongst agriculture and fishery workers;
- Explore industry awareness of risks posed by drug and alcohol use;
- Describe farm and fishing workers perceptions and patterns of drug & alcohol use and physical, mental and social harms experienced from their drug and alcohol use;
- Examine the relationship between farm and fishing workers’ alcohol and drug use, and their levels of drug and alcohol related harms and general health and workplace participation; and
- Provide recommendations to inform the development of an intervention package to reduce alcohol and drug related harms among farm and fishing workers and improve health & safety.

Social impacts of declining water availability & ongoing drought.

Funded by Monash University, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences Strategic Grant.

The aim of this research project is to examine the impacts on people and communities affected by new and severe water restrictions along the Murray River.
The proposed research will examine the social conditions of two sites along the Murray River. Each chosen area will be concentrated on a small community. One site will be an irrigated dairying community as dairy farmers are amongst the most seriously impacted by new water restrictions.

Site visits will occur in the two areas and in-depth interviews will be undertaken with key informants in each site. These informants will include local government personnel, industry representatives and service providers. These interviews will be used to explore the impact of changing water policy on the level of community change and prosperity/decline, new industry growth, loss of industry, service infrastructure and support, local disputes over water and levels of community social capital and cohesion.

Following these interviews family farm partners and/or larger corporation principals and water users will be interviewed about changes consequent on water reform policy. Issues explored will include changes in scope and profitability of farm / irrigation / community business, and the likelihood of changes into the future, including proposed sell offs. The interviews will also explore health, welfare and other social impact issues at the intimate level of the family. These interviews will enable predictions about likely changes in businesses and communities dependent on water and therefore likely future scenarios for the relevant communities and service infrastructure needs.