RMIT UNIVERSITY

Social Change

Enabling Capability Platform

Contact us to partner for a better future

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www.rmit.edu.au/research/research-expertise/
our-focus/enabling-capability-platforms

Working together for positive social change

Australian society is experiencing rapid and far-reaching change on many levels.

Our population is ageing and becoming more diverse and mobile. Global sources of economic power are shifting and impacting on our national economy. The environment is under increasing pressure from urbanisation and climate change. New technologies are changing how we live and work and how governments, businesses and communities function.

These and other changes are already affecting every Australian resident, family and community. RMIT University's **Social Change Enabling Capability Platform** (ECP) is driven by the desire to understand and respond to these changes in ways that benefit communities.

The Social Change ECP builds on RMIT's renowned research strengths in the social sciences, humanities and arts. It draws together over 430 researchers across fields including sociology, media and communications, cultural studies, economics, law, architecture, urban and regional research, social work, migration and global studies.

Our researchers are working with partners in government, industry and the community sector to co-produce new policies, regulations and programs that address major social changes facing Australia and other countries.

Research that addresses social challenges

RMIT's Social Change ECP serves as a unified point of contact within the University for research projects and partnerships relating to social change. It works closely with the University's other Enabling Capability Platforms, particularly the Urban Futures, Global Business Innovation, Information and Systems (Engineering), and Design and Creative Practice ECPs.

Engaging with external partners, stakeholders and communities is integral to the research undertaken by the Social Change ECP. We have strong partnerships with all levels of government, business and the community sector. Our partners range from large technology firms and health care providers to non-government organisations (NGOs) and multilateral international organisations.

A Sector Expert Research Advisory Group of leaders from across government, industry and service sectors will help shape the future direction and priorities of this capability platform. Collaborative research projects are being developed to investigate major social challenges in critical areas: health and social policy and practice; population mobility, migration and security; digital society and economy; and the changing nature of work, income and employment.

The Social Change ECP gives our partners access to experts who understand new and emerging technologies, their potential applications and likely implications for society.

Our vision

Julian Thomas, Director, RMIT Social Change ECP

We will work with our research partners to improve public policy and social outcomes and to inform public understanding of social change.

Working with industry, government and the community sector, our objectives are to:

> **empower people and communities**

> **reduce economic, gendered, spatial, regional and other forms of inequality**

> **strengthen human and political rights, and**

> **enhance social and environmental sustainability**

Examples of Social Change ECP collaborative research projects

RMIT is partnering with local government and a service provider, community organisations, local businesses and residents to develop innovative ways of increasing the local community's capacity to support and include people with disabilities.

This collaborative project responds to the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and its aim of stimulating new ways of increasing independence, social and community participation among people with disabilities.

The researchers are using action-based research to co-design and test new, more inclusive community spaces. Around 100 local residents with disabilities are contributing to the research.

The research outcomes will enable people with disabilities to become more active and included members of their local communities.

This project is funded under RMIT's ECP Opportunity Fund.

The Digital Footscray Pop-up Lab was a place-based pilot project that investigated community resilience, innovation and technology for social change.

RMIT's Digital Ethnography Research Centre delivered the collaborative research project in partnership with a local co-working community space in Footscray. The Lab was embedded in the community for six months to explore questions that matter to local people and organisations, with a focus on learning how they use digital technology.

The project involved cross-disciplinary researchers with interests in digital technology, social change, Footscray, and creative methods. Collaborators included the local government, a local community centre and members of the local Vietnamese community.

Data collected by the researchers is helping local organisations to better meet the needs and aspirations of Footscray residents, including improving access to the public WiFi network for local community centre clients.

This project is funded under RMIT's ECP Capability Development Fund.

Key capabilities

Hundreds of expert research affiliates in disciplines ranging from global, urban and social studies; education; media and communications; to health and biomedical science; architecture; design; law; business and economics.

Internationally recognised areas of research excellence in:

> sociology
> urban and regional planning
> policy and administration
> communication and media studies
> economics
> law
> performing arts and creative writing

Additional research strengths in:

> cultural studies
> social support and care
> the sociology of work
> digital ethnography
> the social determinants of health
> housing and homelessness
> gendered violence and gender inequality
> migration
> geospatial research

Research facilities and centres include:

> The Future Social Service Institute, formed in partnership with the Victorian Council of Social Service
> The RMIT Blockchain Innovation Hub
> Centre for Communication, Politics and Culture
> Communication Technologies Research Centre
> Digital Ethnography Research Centre
> Centre for People, Organisation and Work
> Centre for Education, Training and Work in the Asian Century
> Centre for Urban Research
> Social and Global Studies Centre
> Centre for Art and Social Transformation

Close relationships with:

> local, federal and state governments
> social services, community and health sector peak bodies and organisations
> international non-government organisations
> multilateral international organisations
> media, communications and technology companies
> firms, research centres and networks in Australia, Asia and Europe

Research and innovation priorities

Transformations in health and social policy and practice

How can we understand and help shape possible futures for health and social support? This includes exploring:

> how to design the best quality service systems and infrastructure to meet the needs of individuals and communities, and
> how to contribute to new forms of primary intervention (for instance, in relation to gendered violence)

Transformations in mobility, migration and security

What are the economic, cultural and social implications of increasing global mobility and our changing experiences of place and displacement? This includes understanding:

> the impact relocation and migration has on social identities, networks and political communities, and
> how to improve public policies and practices in migration, settlement and related areas

Transformations in digital society and economy

What are the social, economic and cultural consequences of automation and digital transformations in industry, government and everyday life? This includes asking how to:

> improve digital inclusion
> stimulate an innovative and vibrant economy, and
> protect and extend users' digital rights

Transformations in work

What are the consequences of the changing nature and political economy of work, income and employment in Australia and at the global level?

How can we improve working lives and wellbeing by opening up access to decent work opportunities?

RMIT'S ENABLING CAPABILITY PLATFORMS (ECPs)
> Advanced Materials
> Biomedical and Health Innovation
> Advanced Manufacturing and Fabrication
> Design and Creative Practice
> Global Business Innovation
> Information and Systems (Engineering)
> Social Change
> Urban Futures

Key application areas

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

SMALL AND LARGE NGOS

HEALTH, DISABILITY AND AGED CARE SERVICES

LOCAL, STATE, FEDERAL AND INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENT

JUSTICE, LEGAL AND INSURANCE

MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT SERVICES

TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRIES

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