



**LA TROBE**  
UNIVERSITY

# ARCSHS STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023

Australian Research Centre  
in Sex, Health and Society

[latrobe.edu.au/arcsHS](http://latrobe.edu.au/arcsHS)



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# Mission

The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) conducts world-class research and education on the social dimensions of sexuality, gender, health and human relationships. We work collaboratively with other researchers, communities, community-based organisations, government and professionals to advance knowledge and promote positive change in policy, practice and people's lives.

## Strategic Direction 2020-2023

Our strategic direction for the next three years is to become Australia's leading centre of research excellence in sex, gender, sexuality and consumption, known globally for the excellence and impact of our work.

ARCSHS is already a high-performing centre, producing quality research, and leading policy and social change. This new strategic direction will entail a renewed focus on research excellence through originality, coherence and productivity.

Pursuing this strategic direction will allow ARCSHS to contribute more effectively than ever to answering today's pressing questions on sexuality and gender, and the changing social dynamics of sex, drug use, health and wellbeing.

## Aims

- Advance new knowledge and learning
- Maximise research impact
- Enhance capacity for world-class research

# Values and culture

**ARCSHS is committed to setting a standard of excellence in carrying out research that draws on a social model of health and promotes social justice.**

- ARCSHS undertakes multidisciplinary research, facilitating understanding of human behaviour and experience within a social context, and the interaction of factors at individual, community, social and structural levels that promote or hinder health and wellbeing.
- ARCSHS has a commitment to community-engaged research, and utilises a partnership approach at all stages of the research process to maximise impact.
- ARCSHS maximises the impact of our research by making it available in a wide range of accessible formats, and ensuring it informs the development of training and educational resources, and advocacy to change policy and practice.
- ARCSHS draws knowledge from partners and stakeholders, and all our programs, in developing future research questions.
- ARCSHS is committed to facilitating collegiate intellectual engagement around research questions and debates, and the contributions of different theoretical and methodological approaches.
- ARCSHS seeks to provide a supportive workplace environment that enables the career development of researchers and students in the fields of study relevant to our mission.
- ARCSHS maximises the quality of all our work through peer review, the application of best-practice frameworks, and seeking out expert advice and community consultation.
- ARCSHS values the contributions of students and staff working across research, programs, operations and administration, and seeks to build a genuinely cooperative workplace.
- ARCSHS cultivates and celebrates diversity amongst our staff and students, and relies on the unique perspectives and contributions this brings to the work of the Centre.
- ARCSHS is committed to promoting equity, inclusion and environmental sustainability. The Centre works within and supports broader La Trobe University plans in these areas.

# History and background

**Founded in 1993, ARCSHS plays a leading role in framing the agenda on, and building the knowledge to understand, sex and sexuality in contemporary Australia, particularly as they relate to health, education and social justice.**

ARCSHS is the largest research centre in Australia investigating the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities. This includes a focus on young people, older people, and the intersection of sexuality and gender with other issues, such as disability, family violence and mental health.

The Centre has particular expertise in theorising gender and sexuality, and in investigating their role in health and human relationships. More recently, the Centre has expanded our areas of interest to focus also on the relationship between gender and sexuality and issues of consumption such as alcohol and other drug use, and internet and social media use.

ARCSHS is one of four national centres funded to undertake strategic research as part of Australia's national response to HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). Our research directly informs the implementation of these strategies through investigating the lived experience of priority populations, and informing interventions and service system design.

The Centre uses a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together staff with backgrounds in sociology, psychology, public health, anthropology, cultural studies, history, gender and sexuality studies, education, political science and community education. Our unique expertise in community-engaged research allows us to work effectively and in innovative ways with marginalised and difficult-to-reach communities, using a partnership approach.

In addition, the Centre specialises in using research findings to produce highly-valued training and educational resources for community, services and practitioners. In a range of ways, we work in partnership with government, service providers and community organisations to advance policy and practice to achieve better outcomes.

ARCSHS also has a long-standing and successful higher degree research program. This program focuses on equipping future generations of researchers in areas relevant to the Centre's mission. ARCSHS additionally offers an undergraduate subject within La Trobe University, and is expanding our teaching program in the field of sexuality studies.

# Achievements

The Centre maintains a funding base of around \$5 million per year, drawn from a range of sources, including national competitive grant funding through the Australian Research Council and National Health and Medical Research Council, contracts and consultancies with state and federal government departments, grants from non-government organisations, philanthropic organisations and industry, and support from La Trobe University.

Employing around 30 full-time equivalent staff, the Centre also has a rich network of academic links in Australia and internationally through adjunct academic appointments. The Centre's higher degree research program has an average of 20 postgraduate students enrolled each year, and a strong record of supervision to completion.

The research output generated by the Centre is significant. Over the life of the previous three-year Strategic Plan, this output included the following yearly averages:

- 85 peer-reviewed journal articles
- 3 books and 10 book chapters
- 12 monographs and reports
- 93 presentations at national and international conferences

ARCSHS' research outputs comprise the majority of La Trobe's Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) submission in 'Other Medical and Health Sciences' (FoR 1199), and their quality has been recognised by rankings of 5 ('Well above world standard') in all three assessments.

The Centre has a strong history of collaboration across disciplines and institutions with other researchers and research centres. Staff participate actively in a range of national and international academies and societies, as well as in a range of advisory roles. Centre staff also maintain high levels of participation in academic journal editorial and reviewer roles.

ARCSHS engages strongly with Commonwealth and state and territory governments, as well as with partners in the non-government sectors relevant to our research. Staff hold positions on government committees, and positions on the boards and steering committees of community organisations.

Another key dimension of ARCSHS' work is our ground-breaking program, Rainbow Health Victoria. Funded by the Victorian Government, Rainbow Health Victoria supports LGBTIQ health and wellbeing through research and knowledge translation, training, resources, policy advice and service accreditation through the unique Rainbow Tick program.

More broadly, the Centre is an important provider of training, resources and workforce development programs, particularly in the areas of blood-borne viruses and LGBTIQ-inclusive practice. These programs provide training to over 2,500 people each year.

ARCSHS also conducts an impressive program of public engagement, through seminars and events, articles, appearances in the mainstream media, and a variety of other digital channels such as Facebook, Twitter, newsletters and *The Conversation*. Websites associated with ARCSHS' projects receive over 60,000 visits a year.

In our research, collaboration, training, publications and media engagement activities, ARCSHS aims for high levels of impact. In the ARC's first ever Impact and Engagement Assessment, conducted in 2018, an ARCSHS-authored Case Study received the highest rating for research impact.

## Institutional context

ARCSHS is located within the College of Science, Health and Engineering and the School of Psychology and Public Health at La Trobe University, Melbourne. La Trobe University has a long-standing commitment to high quality health-related research that aims to make a difference in improving lives, health service delivery and policy development.

This approach is reflected in La Trobe's most recent *Strategic Plan, 2018-2022*. The plan outlines a vision for the University 'To promote positive change and address the major issues of our time through being connected, inclusive and excellent'. The plan's core objective in fostering and achieving research excellence includes a focus on engagement and impact, as well as partnerships.

The *University Research Plan 2018-2022* also includes the mission to 'increase human knowledge and strive for a better society through engaged, impactful, outstanding research'.

ARCSHS makes a substantial contribution to the research performance of La Trobe University and the achievement of our research targets in terms of publications and research income, our successful postgraduate program, and strong research partnerships with other universities, government, non-government organisations and industry. The Centre contributes strongly to strategies at College and School level that prioritise research performance, as well as research impact, partnerships and collaborations, and research culture.

The Centre is led by a Director and two Deputies, who work with a staff of enthusiastic and committed researchers and project officers. Administrative, human resources and financial processes are supported through La Trobe University, while staff within the Centre provide support in grants management, research development and Centre operations.

The Centre's governance is established through the University's Research Centre Policy. This includes a Management Committee, and the ARCSHS Strategic and Scientific Advisory Committee, which provides high-level oversight regarding scientific rigour and strategic direction.



## PUBLICATIONS



118

REFEREED JOURNAL  
ARTICLES



18

BOOKS, EDITED BOOKS  
& BOOK CHAPTERS

+27

ADVANCE ONLINE  
PUBLICATIONS

16

REPORTS

## JOURNAL ROLES

64

JOURNAL ARTICLE  
REVIEWS



18

JOURNAL EDITORIAL  
ROLES

## EQUIVALENT FULL-TIME STAFF



18 RESEARCH STAFF

8 RESEARCH TRANSLATION STAFF

4 ADMINISTRATION &  
OPERATIONS STAFF

## PRESENTATIONS



33

INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCES



60

NATIONAL  
CONFERENCES

## TEACHING & TRAINING



18

PHD STUDENTS  
(4 COMPLETIONS)



6K

PEOPLE RECEIVED  
TRAINING

## MEDIA PROFILES



15K

VISITS ON ASSOCIATED  
WEBSITES



107

ARTICLES/BROADCAST  
(AUTHOR & SUBJECT)



10M

REACHED THROUGH  
MAINSTREAM MEDIA

# Gender and gender equality

Gender equality is an integral part of the La Trobe University *Strategic Plan, 2018-2022*, which states that the University 'will strive to be exemplars for the sector in our commitment to gender equity and to inclusivity for marginalised groups'. An important part of ARCSHS' new Strategic Plan is a commitment to furthering gender equality within the Centre.

ARCSHS recognises that the social production of gender as a binary has significant negative consequences for people of all genders. Rigid gender roles are acknowledged as a key driver of discrimination, inequality and violence, with intrinsic ties to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. ARCSHS supports the right of transgender and gender diverse staff to affirm their gender as female, male or non-binary in a way that supports their health and wellbeing. In doing so, the Centre aims to respect and formally recognise each person's affirmed gender identity.

Furthering gender equality also requires a commitment to gender equality in recruitment, promotion, managing workload and providing workplace flexibility (particularly for staff with caring responsibilities). The Centre recognises the need for vigilance in addressing individual conduct and internal culture where they do not support gender equality.

ARCSHS will seek to actively counter the ways in which the social production of gender results in disadvantage for female and trans and gender diverse people, and negatively impacts on workplace inclusion for those who do not fit gender-based norms. A commitment to gender equality will both inform the Centre's internal culture and practices, and our research and programs.





# Research themes

Over the next three years, ARCSHS will consolidate and develop our Australian and international research activities under the following social research themes:

## LGBTIQ health and wellbeing

ARCSHS is the largest research centre focussed on LGBTIQ health and wellbeing in Australia, and since the 1990s has led the field internationally in investigating the experiences and needs of LGBTIQ communities. This research theme aims to advance knowledge of the lives of LGBTIQ individuals and communities, particularly as they relate to health and wellbeing. The new knowledge produced is used by the Centre and others to lead public discussion around the experiences of LGBTIQ communities, and to inform service delivery and policy responses.

## Social responses to HIV and viral hepatitis

ARCSHS has long delivered high-quality strategic research that addresses international issues and also informs Australia's HIV and viral hepatitis national strategies. This research theme is focussed on the experiences, wellbeing and social connections of people living with HIV and viral hepatitis. It also addresses the role, quality and impact of community and peer-led social responses, and their influence in community and policy systems. The theme outcomes advance knowledge on the relationships between community, policy and health services, and inform prevention, testing, treatment and care, and community and peer-led interventions.

## Sexual health and wellbeing

ARCSHS is also a leader in research on sexual health and wellbeing, including experiences of sexuality and sexual health across the life course, from young people to older people. With repeated funding under the national STI strategies, we also track young people's sexual health knowledge, practice and behaviours, and their experiences of sexual health education and prevention. This research theme builds new knowledge, fosters public discussion, and informs interventions in ways that foreground healthy sexuality and pleasure as positive intimate and social expressions.

## Sex, gender and consumption

A relatively new area of research for ARCSHS focuses on sex, gender and consumption. The rise of the consumer society worldwide since the middle of the 20th century has redefined key notions of the self, productivity and responsibility in contemporary life. From shopping, digital sociality, and the healthy body as identity project, to alcohol and other drug use, and other marginalised consumption activity, consumption is sexualised and gendered in ways that shape social, health and other supports and responses. ARCSHS aims to understand the rich dynamics at work in the sexual and gender meanings of consumption in order to enhance academic and public discourse and inform relevant policy responses and service provision.

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International collaboration will be a central priority across all themes. For ARCSHS, this encompasses working with international academic collaborators, conducting research projects involving communities located overseas, addressing global and regional issues, and providing technical advice through relationships with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and international bodies such as the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.



# Partnership approach

A key principle that runs through all of the Centre's work, and is essential to achieving our aims, is the involvement of partners.

ARCSHS' research involves a wide range of populations and communities, and the Centre strives to maximise their involvement. Research partners also include:

- Researchers and research institutions
- Government departments
- Government advisory bodies
- Peak bodies
- Community and non-governmental organisations
- Service providers
- Practitioners and professionals
- Industry

Partners are consulted and involved at every stage of the research process, through a range of tailored strategies and relationships. This often includes the formation of advisory or reference committees for projects, programs or areas of research. It also encompasses ongoing feedback mechanisms from research participants, and from organisations representing communities. These participatory strategies are guided by a range of research quality and community engagement principles in relevant areas, such as the Greater Involvement of People with HIV or GIPA principle.

All work conducted with partners, including training and resource development using research results, in turn informs the development of future research questions. Ongoing consultation and relationships with partners are key in building a responsive and relevant research program that is both high quality and has high impact.

# Aim 1:

## Advance new knowledge and learning

**ARCSHS' primary aim as a research centre is to produce and contribute to new knowledge and learning.**

Our program of research and education is multidisciplinary and advances knowledge about the social dimensions of sexuality, gender, health and human relationships. The Centre seeks to enhance the profile of social research on these issues as a critical and recognised field of inquiry.

ARCSHS strives for the highest levels of scholarly recognition, through competitive grant funding and commissioned research, peer-reviewed publication and conference presentations.

A key objective of the Centre's postgraduate research program is to attract and develop new researchers in our research areas – something that the Centre is expanding into other teaching options identified within La Trobe University.

The ARCSHS Annual Report is an important yearly record of the broad range of research and education conducted by the Centre.

Actions	Measures
Publish and disseminate research results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer-reviewed publications</li> <li>• Reports on commissioned research</li> <li>• Presentations at national and international conferences</li> </ul>
Achieve recognition for research quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High ranking in Excellence in Research for Australia assessment</li> <li>• Academic awards</li> <li>• Membership of international and national academies</li> </ul>
Attract research funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National and international competitive grant income</li> <li>• Commonwealth and state government funding</li> <li>• Research funding from NGOs, industry or philanthropic organisations</li> <li>• Funding proposals submitted and success rate</li> </ul>
Deliver high-quality postgraduate and teaching program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students enrolled</li> <li>• Students completed</li> <li>• Student satisfaction</li> </ul>



# Aim 2:

## Maximise research impact

**ARCSHS' mission to produce positive change in people's lives drives a strong focus on research impact.**

This means influencing discussion within academia, informing policy, engaging practitioners and the sectors involved in service delivery, and changing the broader public discourse on an issue.

Maximising research impact requires getting the research questions right (through engagement with communities, partners and stakeholders), conducting cutting-edge, methodologically sound research, and using effective methods for communication and engagement.

The Centre continues to deliver training and resources that incorporate the latest research and are informed through partnerships. The latter contribute to research impact, but also drive further development of research questions arising from on-the-ground experiences and implementation.

The Centre plans to contribute to future rounds of the ARC's Impact and Engagement Assessment and will continue to write up case studies and impact reports that track the long-term contribution of our research to change.

The Centre maintains our own reporting system to collect key data about impact, while also working within University systems and projects that support this aim.

Actions	Measures
Impact on policy, practice and public knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citation of research in or authorship of policies, strategies, guidelines</li> <li>• Membership of national and state policy advisory committees</li> <li>• Training numbers and evaluation</li> <li>• Case studies and impact reports</li> </ul>
Influence within the academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Editorial roles or reviewing for journals</li> <li>• Advisory roles for other academic institutions</li> </ul>
Influence through partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in boards/steering groups of community organisations</li> <li>• Presentations at meetings</li> </ul>
Influence through media and public profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media statistics</li> <li>• Public events and launches</li> <li>• Newsletter and web statistics</li> <li>• Social media profile</li> </ul>

# Aim 3:

## Enhance capacity for world-class research

Achieving the other aims in this Strategic Plan requires enhancing ARCSHS' capacity for world-class research.

With a new Director and a strong senior staff team in place, the Centre is in a good position to build our research output and impact, attract additional funding, and support the development of scholarship among staff and students.

ARCSHS will build on an already highly productive workforce capable of both independent and team-based work. We aim to sustain a positive internal culture that facilitates support and collaboration among staff, as well as productive external relationships. One focus of this plan is to develop a gender equality action plan, to promote the full development and inclusion of all staff, including female and trans and gender diverse staff.

Across all our projects, ARCSHS ensures that activities reflect best practice in research and education, and comply with all necessary codes, policies and procedures required by the University and external funders. The Centre will continue to look for any opportunities to improve our effectiveness and further professionalise our approach.

Two key factors in the future sustainability of the Centre are enhanced predictability of our funding base, and continuing support in operational functioning from La Trobe University. ARCSHS will seek to contribute to School, College and La Trobe University plans and targets, and promote our work to a broad audience within the University.

Actions	Measures
Foster a productive and collaborative workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment and retention of research leaders</li> <li>Timely promotions</li> <li>Staff satisfaction with supervision, mentoring and support</li> <li>Regular forums for collaboration and feedback</li> <li>Gender equality action plan</li> </ul>
Be effective and professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear and effective management and governance structures</li> <li>Effective administrative and operational support</li> </ul>
Take action to support future sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear model for funding within La Trobe</li> <li>Continuous improvement in University administrative support systems</li> <li>Contribution to University plans and targets, and promote the Centre's work</li> </ul>





# Monitoring and review

This Strategic Plan is a key public document that outlines ARCSHS' mission, aims and expectations of performance for the period 2020-2023.

The purpose of the plan is to set the direction for ARCSHS in our next stage of development, and allow for ongoing analysis and necessary adjustments along the way. It will be used internally as a planning tool and be reviewed annually with input from staff and students. This will allow the Centre to track progress and revise plans for the coming year. A report from each annual review will be provided to the Strategic and Scientific Advisory Committee.

A new plan will be prepared in 2023.



La Trobe University proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where its campuses are located in Victoria and New South Wales. We recognise that Indigenous Australians have an ongoing connection to the land and value their unique contribution, both to the University and the wider Australian society.

La Trobe University is committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both as individuals and communities, through teaching and learning, research and community partnerships across all of our campuses.

The wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*) is one of the world's largest.

The Wurundjeri people – traditional owners of the land where ARCSHS is located and where our work is conducted – know the wedge-tailed eagle as Bunjil, the creator spirit of the Kulin Nations.

There is a special synergy between Bunjil and the La Trobe logo of an eagle. The symbolism and significance for both La Trobe and for Aboriginal people challenges us all to 'gamagoen yarrbat' – to soar.

## Contact

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