



SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

ABOUT ISF

The Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) is a research and consulting organisation at the University of Technology, Sydney. We work with industry, government and the community to help create sustainable futures by conducting independent project based research.

Our excellent and fast growing reputation is for innovative, solution-focused inter-disciplinary projects.

OUR SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY WORK

We work in a number of different research areas using a variety of approaches. **This capability statement outlines our expertise in the field of social sustainability.** Capability statements for other areas we work in are available from our web site.

The social and cultural dimensions of creating change towards sustainability are an integral part of our work. The socially sustainable future we seek is one that is just, equitable, inclusive and democratic and delivers a decent quality of life for current and future generations. We also believe that social sustainability demands an improvement in the quality of democracy, because meaningful citizen participation is essential for a sustainable future.

“Sustainability has always been linked to a core concept of human need so it is a fundamental contradiction to believe it can be achieved without improved social equity and social progress. ~Maria Adebawale, 2002.”

Key themes for our social sustainability work are:

Justice – fairness, equity and human rights issues in the areas of impact assessment, needs studies and evaluation

Dialogue – participatory and deliberative methods of research to inform decision-making, policy, planning and evaluation.

Institutions – policy, management, administration and change.



WHAT WE OFFER

The Institute undertakes high quality social research. We explore the social dimensions of sustainability, the inter-relationship between environmental issues and social and cultural issues, and the links between sustainability and social justice.

We offer:

- > expertise in social research methods such as interviewing, surveys, literature reviews, document analysis and other ways of exploring and analysing community and stakeholder values.
- > specialised participatory and deliberative processes such as citizens juries, and other techniques that can be used to inform decision-making, policy development, planning and evaluation. (See our 'Participation and Engagement' capability statement for further details).
- > a conceptual framework for approaching social sustainability. Research Principal Emma Partridge's paper '*Social sustainability: a useful theoretical framework?*' (2005), is available on our website.
- > research founded on the principles of social justice: equity, fairness and participation.
- > social researchers within the Institute who draw upon a range of social science disciplines (including sociology, cultural studies, psychology, law, economics, management, planning and geography).
- > a practically oriented and theoretically informed approach, aimed at generating knowledge to create positive social change.

RECENT SUCCESSES

Some of our recent social research work. Further information on our web site.

Activism, advocacy and engagement

Research exploring the question of how to engage people in activism and advocacy. Literature review and interviews with various non-profit organisations. (Cancer Council NSW)

Audits of Australian democracy

Two 'democratic audits' for an Australian Research Council project at the Australian National University. The first assessed Australia's progress towards gender equality, and the second examined how well Australian democracy is serving sexual and gender minorities. (Democratic Audit of Australia, ANU). Download reports: www.democraticaudit.anu.edu.au

Social indicators

Review of existing indicators and development of new suite of sustainability indicators for the LGA, balancing and integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. (Gosford City Council)

Public-government decision making

Contribution to international cross-cultural research exploring government decision-making practices around the world. Interviews with elected officers, public administrators and public participation practitioners explored cultures of public participation across Australasia. (International Association for Public Participation)

Young people and the environment

Exploration of young people's relationship to environmental issues. Considered young people's environmental views and actions, and existing and potential opportunities for participation in environmental policy development and decision-making. (NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change)

Householder research

Community workshops investigating household electricity use. Explored householder behaviour, reasons for increasing use, barriers to saving energy and potential strategies to help householders reduce consumption. (Moreland Energy Foundation Ltd)



'Public good' valuation

Evaluation of the 'public good' contribution of community legal centres. Case studies illustrated the range of market and non-market costs and benefits of these services. (National Association of Community Legal Centres)

Healthy places and spaces

Research and development of case studies of sites that encourage healthy, active living. Provided as online content to augment planning and design guidelines. See: www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/case_studies. (NSW Premier's Council for Active Living)

Environment groups

Research exploring people's involvement with a range of environment groups. Literature review and empirical research (online survey, interviews and focus groups) with people involved and not involved in groups. Developed conceptual model of environmental participation. (NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change)

Pricing impacts on rural communities

Examination of the impact of NSW water pricing guidelines on rural communities. Involved interviews and surveys with stakeholders in local government and the community welfare sector in various rural NSW communities. (Public Interest Advocacy Centre)

Perceptions of sustainable housing

Exploration of consumer and industry perceptions of sustainable housing. Literature review, surveys, stakeholder interviews. Defined key drivers for housing choice and informed development of Queensland Government policy. (Queensland Environmental Protection Agency)



Community responses to contamination

Exploration of how communities respond to environmental contamination in their local area. Empirical research with two case study communities in NSW. (Co-operative Research Centre for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment)

Safety for street sex workers

Research to assist the City of Sydney to develop a Street Based Sex Work Strategy. Review of existing reports and data. Analysis of results of survey of sex workers and clients. Considered safety and health issues for workers, views of residents, and regulation and management issues for Council. Recommended improvements to Council planning and management strategies. (City of Sydney)

Social sustainability in development

Research and written factsheets on social sustainability topics to the 'Your Development' online resource. Factsheets discussed achieving community integration and incorporating community facilities in new developments. www.yourdevelopment.org (CSIRO, Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage, and the Arts)

OUR SOCIAL RESEARCH TEAM

Emma Partridge

Emma is a qualitative social researcher with a background in sociology and gender studies, an MA in cultural studies, and extensive experience in policy, research and consulting contexts. Her work focuses on the link between social justice and sustainability. She has published a paper developing a theoretical framework for social sustainability, and given presentations on social sustainability in various contexts. Emma has considerable knowledge and experience of the public policy process and worked in various senior social research and social policy roles in the state and commonwealth public sectors before joining ISF.

Dr Chris Riedy

Chris has more than 12 years experience in sustainability policy. He has particular

expertise in energy policy, climate change response, water policy and questions of social justice. In 2006, Chris organised and facilitated a deliberative citizens' forum on climate change response in the ACT. He is currently leading Australia's involvement in the World Wide Views on Global Warming project, a global citizens' participation event focusing on climate change response.

Dr Jason Prior

Jason has worked in the social and cultural dimensions of sustainability for the past decade, across planning, education, policy development, monitoring and evaluation. Through his interdisciplinary training in planning, sociology and architecture he has extensive expertise in the creation of community, social and cultural planning and regeneration processes for the development industry and all levels of governments. He has published, presented and taught on cultural, social, participatory and community planning, and currently teaches the social planning Masters program at the University of New South Wales.

Jade Herriman

Jade has eight years experience in sustainability research and project management, with experience in change management, policy review, cost benefit analysis and participative processes. She has a particular interest in organisational and social aspects of sustainability. Jade has worked on projects involving a range of social research methods and on participatory process design and deliberative democracy.

Naomi Carrard

With a background in geography and history and a Masters degree in environmental law, Naomi is experienced in a range of quantitative and qualitative social science research methods. She has worked internationally and in Australia in the field of sustainable development, particularly integrated water resource management and access to water and sanitation. She is experienced in data collection through interviews and workshops, stakeholder and context analysis, policy analysis and cost



effectiveness analysis. Research interests include the use of spatial analysis in social science research, and developing effective ways to communicate sustainability messages to different audiences.

Associate Professor Mick Paddon

Mick has over 25 years experience in strategic planning and project management. Originally trained in economics and the social sciences, he has particular expertise in innovative approaches to strategic, integrated and sustainable development. He is interested in the economic, social and political impacts of organisational change, particularly in the public sector, public services and utilities. Mick has worked as an academic and policy adviser to governments in Australia, the UK and throughout Asia, to international bodies, including the UN and ILO, and to national and international NGOs.

Professor Stuart White

Stuart is the Director of ISF. He has worked and undertaken research in sustainable futures for over twenty years, specialising in the use of least cost planning for utilities and the advocacy, design, implementation and evaluation of programs for improving resource use efficiency. In 2000, he was requested by the NSW Minister for the Environment to undertake an Independent Review of Container Deposit Legislation. The project pioneered a world first in social research methodology – utilising a combination of citizens jury and televote processes.



WAYS WE CAN HELP

Consulting and research services:

We can provide the research you need to move towards sustainable futures. We provide consulting services under both negotiated and tendered contracts.

Professional advice:

You may need assistance with preliminary work before embarking on a larger project or an external review of an existing program. Our professional advice is available either for an hourly rate or on a package basis.

Partnerships:

We have many ongoing partnerships across a range of technical fields and can coordinate a specialist team to meet your requirements. Our researchers are also available to join new or existing partnerships as needed.

Guest speakers:

We are experienced in communicating complex issues in an accessible and engaging way. Our researchers are often invited to speak at conferences, forums, workshops and seminars. We are also frequently called upon by print, radio and television journalists for expert opinion.

PUBLICATIONS

We are committed to sharing the results of our work in the interests of a more sustainable future for all. Many of our reports, discussion papers, journal articles and conference papers can be downloaded from our website.

CONTACT US

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BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH ISF

Track record:

We have been conducting project based research for Australian and international clients for a decade and have an excellent reputation for innovative, solution-focused work.

Applying current thinking and practice:

Our researchers are not only up to date with best practice and current thinking - they contribute to it. Their research is published regularly in academic journals as well as industry and scientific publications and the popular media.

Practical and diverse experience:

Our researchers come from varied backgrounds, including: engineering architecture, management, economics, science, social sciences, international studies and political studies. Most have worked in both government and commercial environments, so know how to deliver independent and feasible solutions to suit the needs of a diverse range of clients. We are small enough to offer our clients personalised service and large enough to offer a diversity of research skills.

Collaborative approach:

We seek to create change towards a sustainable future by building capacity in organisations and individuals, and in the broader community. This means that we actively aim to pass on our knowledge and skills to our clients through close collaboration.