



Impact Report

2019-2024

About us

The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute (the Institute) is an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to researching the cultural, economic and political forces which shape social cohesion in Australia. In addition, we collaborate in this work with government, academic institutions, community agencies and the people they represent.

The Institute conducts rigorous independent research into the key indicators of social well-being in Australia. Since its founding in 2019 as the research arm of the Scanlon Foundation the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute has established itself as the country's preeminent source of knowledge about Australia's social cohesion.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Message from our Chief Executive Officer	
Our Mission	5
Our Impact	6
Our Work	7
Mapping Social Cohesion report	8
Australian Cohesion Index	10
Strengthening Democracy Project	11
Voices of Australia podcast	12
Essays, Narratives and Insights	13
Australian Migration and Population Dashboard	15
Refugee Experiences in Australia Study	16
Professional Development programs	17
Webinars	18
Our People	19

Message from our Chief Executive Officer

Since 2009 the Scanlon Foundation has been annually tracking the state of social cohesion in Australia. Over this now 18 year period, and especially since the formation of the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute in 2019, an 'extraordinary resource' of knowledge about the state of social cohesion has been developed.

More specifically, over the past five years, the success of the program can be measured by the reality that this body of research now helps shape national conversations, inform policy, and strengthen community connections. I'm pleased to report that we have achieved that goal, and in many ways surpassed it.

Our mapping Social Cohesion reports has become an internationally recognised benchmark trusted by governments, media, and organisations in the multicultural and migrant sphere.

That trust has enabled the Institute to expand its role. We now work with government to help improve services and programs aimed at strengthening the social bonds of our extraordinarily diverse society. Our database has become an invaluable resource for policymakers, researchers and community organisations. Our long-form research papers have found a broad readership in the mainstream media. Our work has in turn deepened our grass-roots connection with communities and the service organisations that support them.

The following pages summarise some of our major achievements: establishing our annual Mapping Social Cohesion Report

as the gold standard measure of the nation's state of mind on immigration and multiculturalism; collaborating with the Federal Government and the Australian Bureau of Statistics on a measuring tool to guide future policies on social inclusion; conducting on-the-ground research for government into the experiences of refugees and humanitarian migrants; providing data and research to agencies, policymakers and community organisations directly involved in the settlement of migrant communities; and amplifying public discourse about social cohesion across all forms of media.

None of this work would have been possible without the vision and generosity of, Peter Scanlon AO, who founded the Scanlon Foundation in 2001 at a time when the study of social cohesion was still a nascent discipline. The success of the foundation's work led Peter to recognise that a stand-alone research Institute dedicated to that issue would be an invaluable national resource.

In the past two years, Australia has welcomed unprecedented levels of new arrivals, and the cultural mix of our society is more diverse and complex than ever. At the same time, the destabilising effects of global conflict, political extremism and online disinformation exert enormous pressure on social cohesion here and around the world. The work of the Institute will be more important than ever in the years ahead, and we look forward to playing an important role in helping to sustain Australia's standing as a model multicultural nation.

Anthea Hancocks
Chief Executive Officer

Our mission

Australia has absorbed more migrants per capita than any developed country over the past 80 years, creating a nation unique in its cultural diversity and cohesion. The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute is dedicated to studying that singular achievement and mapping its progress, so that Australia's success as a multicultural model can be sustained into the future.

Our parent organisation, the Scanlon Foundation, identified rigorous research as a core mission when it launched the first Mapping Social Cohesion report in 2007. This groundbreaking work combined qualitative field research with quantifiable data and was led by the eminent social researcher Emeritus Professor Andrew Markus and his team at Monash University, alongside Bruce Smith and the Social Research Centre.

In 2019, the Institute was established to expand and deepen those research efforts. Building on the pioneering work of Professor Markus and his team, the Institute has created a rich information resource that now includes broad population surveys, data maps, podcast interviews, long-form essays, intensive field research, webinars, websites and collaborative projects with government, community organisations and the media.

Our aim is to both assess the state of social cohesion in Australia and point the way forward at a time when the nation's cultural make-up continues to grow. The tumultuous events of recent years have given that mission added urgency, as immigration levels at first plummeted during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21 before rebounding with more than 730,000 migrants arriving in Australia in 2022-23.

During this period, the Institute's work was highly sought after, solidifying its standing as Australia's preeminent research body dedicated to the study and mapping of social cohesion. New projects have aimed to improve refugee services, strengthen community support for democratic principles and guide government as it responds to the pressures on social cohesion caused by disinformation and political polarisation.

The Institute, like its parent organisation, is dedicated to supporting initiatives that sustain and nurture Australia's success as the world's most cohesive multicultural society.

Our impact

450,000+

visitors to our website

280,000+

downloads/views of our Mapping Social Cohesion Reports

600+

media reports annually of SFRI work, equating to an accumulated potential reach of 20 million people annually

400%

Increase in media reporting on social cohesion since 2018

6750+

podcast downloads

72,000+

Australians surveyed for the Institute's database

1,100+

mentions in publications including academic citations

50+

mentions in Parliament

Government response

The Institute's work has been endorsed by successive Australian governments, which have commissioned the Institute to help formulate policy and initiatives.

“An effective and practical example of determining national social cohesion is the Scanlon Institute's work in Australia.”

Dame Sara Khan DBE, Independent Adviser to the UK Government for Social Cohesion and Resilience

“This is an enormously important resource.”

Alex Hawke, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, launching the 2020 Mapping Social Cohesion Report



Peter Khalil MP, Australia's first Special Envoy for Social Cohesion, with the 2024 Mapping Social Cohesion Report



Our work

Mapping Social Cohesion report

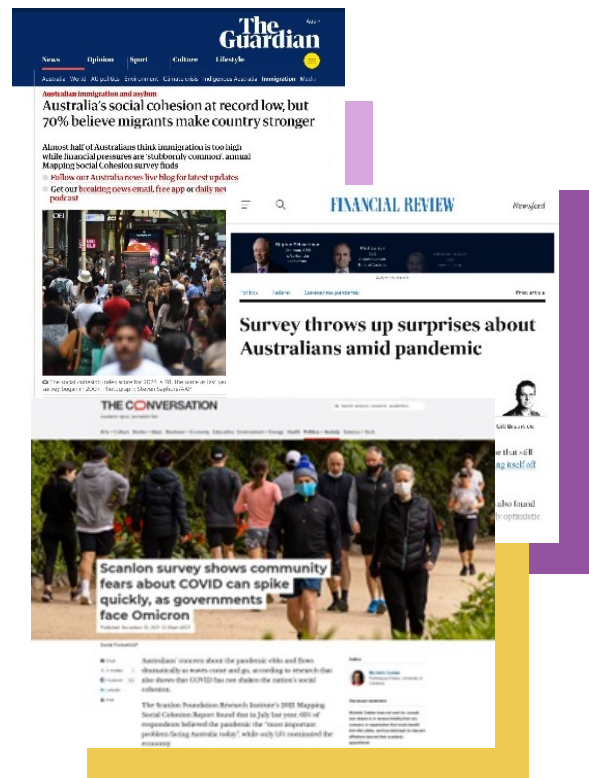
The Mapping Social Cohesion reports are the cornerstone of the Institute's work, providing a comprehensive, longitudinal survey of social cohesion in Australia. Since their inception in 2007, 17 reports have been published, offering a detailed analysis of Australians' views on a broad range of questions relating to immigration, economic security, environmental issues and measures of social wellbeing.

The reports are a feat of social research initiated by Emeritus Professor Andrew Markus AO and his team at Monash University, carried forward since 2022 by Dr James O'Donnell at the Australian National University. Based on surveys of thousands of Australians, supplemented by in-depth interviews, the reports present a rich and evolving portrait of the nation's collective mindset over time.

The Institute took stewardship of the reports in 2019, at a time when recognition of their importance was growing rapidly. The Institute's research and data became a critical resource for government and support agencies during the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Federal Government has since commissioned the Institute to carry out additional research initiatives.

Government ministers from both sides of federal politics have championed the Mapping Social Cohesion reports as an invaluable resource. State governments have also drawn on the Institute's work, notably to help shape multicultural policy in New South Wales and Western Australia, and educational programs in Queensland. More recently the Institute has broadened its data analysis so that it is useful at a local government level as well.

The Mapping Social Cohesion reports have effectively put social cohesion on the map of public discourse in Australia and have been cited as a model for governments internationally. In her 2024 report to the UK Government on social cohesion, Dame Sara Khan devoted a section to explaining the methodology of the Scanlon Index and praising its effectiveness. Also, in 2024, report author Dr James O'Donnell was a keynote speaker at a workshop on the measurement of social cohesion at the University of Bremen in Germany. Germany, continuing its international reach that has included Switzerland, Canada, New Zealand and Singapore.



“When I came across the Scanlon figures I saw that these were the most beautiful, precise measurements of how Australia was dealing with its unique situation of being this big heterogeneous society that welcomes very large numbers of immigrants year after year.”

David Marr, author, journalist and broadcaster



Australian Cohesion Index

In 2020 the Federal Government commissioned the Institute to create a biannual index of social cohesion indicators to enhance and guide government policy decisions. Announcing the initiative at the National Press Club, the former Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure, Alan Tudge, praised the Institute's work and noted that extreme dislocation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the fracturing effects of social media had made social cohesion a priority issue for government.

The Australian Cohesion Index was launched in 2021 and was embraced by the incoming Federal Labor Government elected in 2022. The index marries selected findings from the Institute's Mapping Social Cohesion surveys with datasets provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It also incorporates qualitative research drawn from in-depth interviews with citizens on a range of themes. The result is a comprehensive picture of the health, wellbeing and connectedness of Australian society.

The 2023 index covered the years 2008-2022, providing a range of statistics on personal income, employment, political engagement, trust in government, education outcomes, mental well-being and other indicators. The accompanying

qualitative research detailed people's responses within four broad themes: Trust in Society, Belonging and Engagement, Economic and Material Wellbeing and Health.

The report was launched by the former Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Andrew Giles, who described it as "one of our best tools for gauging public sentiment on a wide range of crucially important topics, from the very foundations of our democracy to social, community and economic engagement and so much more.

"The Australian Cohesion Index...is one of our best tools for gauging public sentiment on a wide range of crucially important topics, from the very foundations of our democracy to social, community and economic engagement and so much more. It also shows that many of the issues that Australia faces are shared by other nations."

Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural affairs

Strengthening Democracy Project

In January 2023 the Federal Government established the Strengthening Democracy Taskforce in response to growing concerns about the threats to democratic stability posed by foreign interference, online disinformation and political extremism. The taskforce commissioned the Institute to undertake a project in support of its work.

The project involved multiple streams:

- > An evaluation of programs and initiatives that have proven effective in strengthening democratic resilience.
- > Research public discussion about democracy in the community
- > Devise an online platform to make research on democratic resilience visually understandable and broadly accessible.

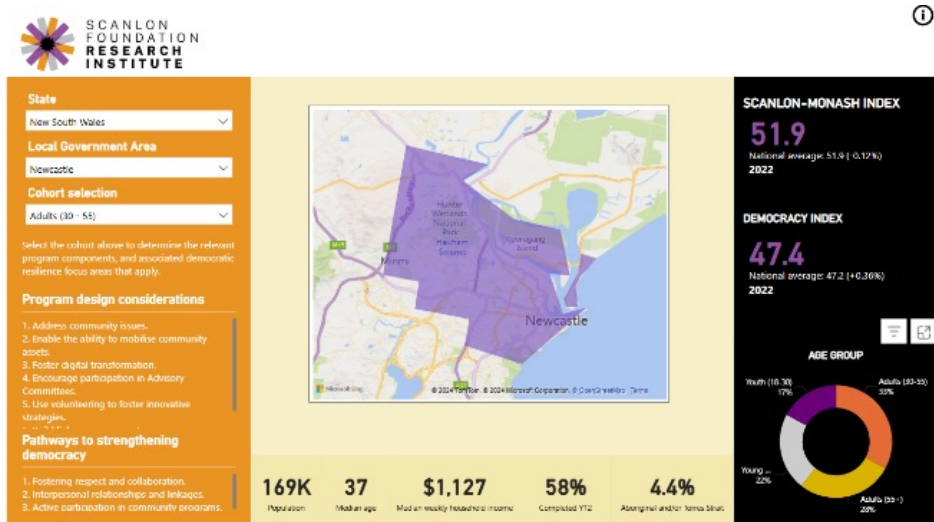
The Institute leveraged its extensive research to deliver this project, drawing particularly on its collaboration with the Social Research Centre. Together, they utilised data from the Institute's surveys and the Australian Bureau of Statistics into Local Government Areas (LGAs). The Institute's mapping of employment, health, income and other indicators at state and

local government levels formed a key component of the dataset underpinning this project.

The Institute produced three research reports detailing its findings and developed an online tool – the **Social Cohesion Compass** – to make the Institute's research and recommendations widely available to all including government, not-for-profit organisations and researchers.

The Social Cohesion Compass provides comparative data on various measures, including the Scanlon Index and a new 'Democracy Index Score'. These indices are broken down to the local government level, enabling comparative research. The Compass also contains recommendations for programs to enhance democratic resilience and social cohesion, as well as indicators to track improvements or declines in outcomes.

The Social Cohesion Compass will be updated regularly, making it a valuable and practical tool for improving democratic resilience and social cohesion for years to come.



Voices of Australia podcasts

Launched in 2022, the Voices of Australia podcast reflects the Institute's aim to broaden its reach into the multi-media sphere. The podcast features the Institute's CEO, Anthea Hancocks, engaging in thought provoking conversations with a range of Australians. There have been 31 episodes of the podcast over three seasons, the most recent of which explored how social cohesion is influenced by a range of factors, among them religion, sport and

national identity. Anthea's guests have included academics, economists and popular figures like broadcaster Jon Faine, comedian Diana Nguyen, AFLW player Emma Kearney and economist Professor Ian Harper AO.

Voices of Australia is available on all podcast outlets, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Google Podcasts, and can be viewed on YouTube.

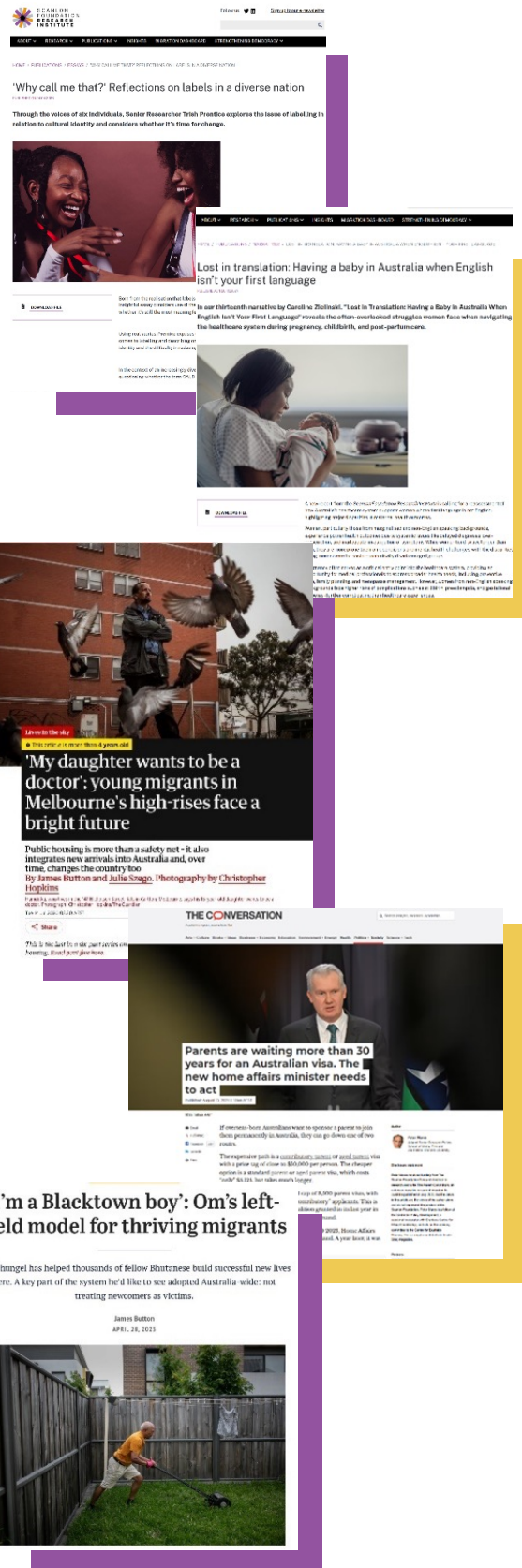


Essays, Narratives and Insights

A core aim of the Institute is promoting debate and raising awareness of the importance of social cohesion. A significant achievement has been the commissioning of essays and long-form narratives which delve deeply into issues relevant to Australia's culturally diverse society and its opportunities and its opportunities.

The Institute has published seven essays by social researcher Trish Prentice, examining Australia from the viewpoint of its migrant communities. Topics have included intercultural marriage, social labels, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on religious communities, and migrant involvement in volunteerism and emergency services. Trish joined the Institute in 2020 after working extensively in the government, academic and not-for-profit sectors both locally and overseas. Her background enables her to combine empathic interviewing with a broad knowledge of the issues her essays address.

The Institute also commissions esteemed journalists and researchers to produce long-form narratives which explore the stories of our diverse communities. Published twice yearly, these narratives are unique in offering writers time and space to immerse themselves in a specific aspect of Australian society. In past narratives, the Walkley award-winning journalist James Button painted an absorbing portrait of the Sydney municipality of Blacktown, journalist Peter Mares provided an important and independent analysis that makes a case for urgent reform of Australia's troubled approach to parent migration, and author Julie Szego examined the transformative effects of the Chinese community on Box Hill in Melbourne's East.



Essays, Narratives and Insights

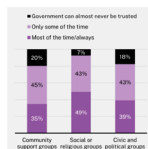
Because of their readability and rich detail, these essays and narratives have spread the Institute’s message to a broader readership via mainstream media. Caroline Zielinski’s examination of migrant political involvement was excerpted as a feature story in Good Weekend, the magazine of The Age and Sydney Morning Herald. James Button’s narrative account of African communities living in Melbourne’s high-rise housing commission flats, was republished in the Guardian while his narrative on Blacktown resulted in two major articles in The Guardian.

Peter Mares’ narrative was referenced across the ABC, The Wire, SBS and sector news. In addition, Trish Prentice’s essay on emergency services volunteers yielded four magazine articles across a range of publications in that sector.

The Institute’s Insights series provides deeper analysis of key themes from the Mapping Social Cohesion Report. It offers valuable fabric, covering topics such as Happiness and Social Cohesion, Participation, politics and diversity, Inequality and the ‘Fair Go’ in Australia.



Figure 5. “How often do you think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?”, by involvement in groups, 2021



Migrant communities

It is sometimes argued that migrants – particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds – do not see themselves reflected in Australia’s political leadership (1) In the last Federal Parliament, for instance, only 12 out of 76 Senators and 13 out of 191 Members of the House of Representatives were born overseas (2) Even fewer were born in countries where English is not the main language spoken.

The *Petitions to Preselection* essay highlighted that migrants and people from non-English speaking backgrounds engage in diverse forms of political action. Many of the individuals who shared their stories said that they had felt somewhat excluded from Australian political life, whether due to language barriers, lack of shared knowledge in their communities about Australian politics, or feelings of being ignored by politicians. For instance, Joannie, an activist for the organisation Democracy in Colour, said:

“When we don’t get listened to or we don’t get heard by the people who are supposed to listen to us, it feels very disheartening.”

Perhaps encouragingly, the MSC survey showed that people born overseas had high levels of trust in the federal government: 91% believed that the government could be trusted at least some of the time, compared to 87% of Australian-born respondents.

However, the MSC survey results look somewhat different when we examine migrants’ political action and community group involvement. **People from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) had much lower rates of political action** (aside from voting in elections) when compared to native English speakers (see Figure 6). People from non-English speaking backgrounds also had **lower rates of active participation** in community organisations compared to people with English as their first language (see Figure 7).

These findings reflect some of the views that were voiced in the *Petitions to Preselection* essay. For instance, Tu Lu, a former candidate for the NSW Federal seat of Fowler, said:

“There is a sense, in migrant communities, that Australia is not necessarily our home. We are still guests in this country, so maybe we don’t have a right to have a say or we don’t have a right to be as politically engaged.”

Nevertheless, the essay demonstrates how migrant community leaders had formed their own political advocacy organisations, been appointed as councillors in local government, ran for election, and worked on increasing awareness about politics amongst their communities.

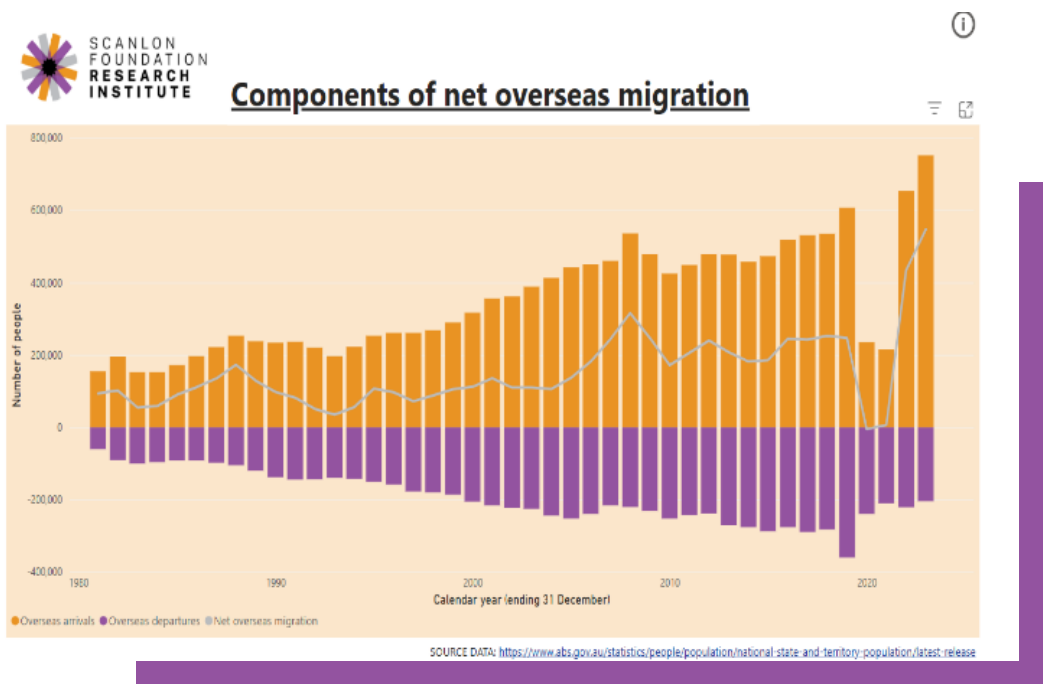
Australian Migration and Population Dashboard

The Institute developed the Australian Migration and Population Dashboard as an online infographic resource of verified statistics on migration and demographics. The Institute draws on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Home Affairs to create readily accessible charts and visualisations of various measures, including immigration, emigration, population, visa trends and migration program outcomes.

The data visualisation tool presents multiple datasets in clear visual form and is of particular use for researchers and

journalists. Migration statistics are broken down into visa types, including detailed longitudinal charts showing the number of entrants who have arrived on skilled, temporary and permanent visas, on-shore and off-shore, and through humanitarian assistance.

Population statistics date back to 1980 and are broken down by year, country of birth and geographical location. Explanatory texts provide contextual information and hyperlinked data sources.



Refugee Experiences in Australia Study

In further recognition of the Institute's knowledge and expertise, the Department of Home Affairs commissioned the Institute to survey refugee and humanitarian migrants about their experience of integrating into Australian society.

The project began in 2022 with a quantitative survey carried out with the support of community liaison officers. This was supplemented by qualitative interviews with 30 individuals, guided by advice from refugee agencies, over a two-month period.

The Institute worked closely on this project with the Social Research Centre. The government was seeking a rich data source on refugee and humanitarian migrant experiences of social connectedness, safety, identification with Australia, and access to government services. The Institute delivered the first report in 2023 and has been commissioned to repeat the research in 2025.

Professional Development programs

The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute has a rich history of fostering leadership development through its short course programs, running since 2020. Previously offered in partnership with Monash University as a summer school unit, these programs have evolved to reflect the growing importance of workplace diversity and inclusion.

In 2024, in collaboration with the Melbourne Business School, the Institute delivered a two-day intensive short course focused on harnessing diversity. The

program explored culturally responsive leadership, equipping participants with advanced frameworks, operational strategies, and inclusive policies tailored to diverse workplace dynamics.

By emphasising the value of cultural heritage in building thriving, diversity-positive environments, the course offered participants unique insights, enriched by the expertise of world-class academics and industry leaders with experience in multinational organisations.

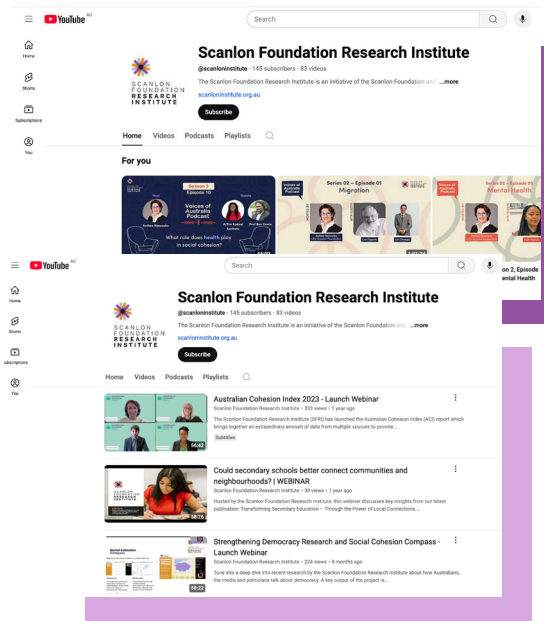
Image: Scanlon Foundation Research Institute CEO Anthea Hancocks with facilitators and participants of the leadership course.



Webinars

The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute hosts webinars throughout the year, delving into critical topics related to social cohesion. These sessions, often connected to publication releases or new research, explore issues like the cultural gap in aged care, perceptions of government and politics, and the impact of the pandemic on Australia's social cohesion.

Each webinar features expert insights and engaging discussions. All sessions are recorded and made available on demand via the Institute's YouTube channel, ensuring accessibility for a broader audience.



Our people

Board Directors:

Dr Sonja Hood AM (Chair)
Chief Executive Officer
Scanlon Foundation

Peter Scanlon AO
Founder of the Scanlon Foundation

Kin Ho (Secretary) (Independent)
Director
Ho Withers & Associates

James Button (Independent)
Author and Journalist

Emeritus Professor Andrew Markus AO
(Independent)
Monash University

NB: *Danielle Wood, previous CEO of the Grattan Institute, retired as a director in late 2023.*

Research Committee:

Anthea Hancocks
Chief Executive Officer
Scanlon Foundation Research Institute

Dr James O'Donnell
School of Demography
Australian National University

Dr Peter McDonald AO
Professor of Demography
Melbourne School of Population and
Global Health, University of Melbourne

James Button
Author and journalist

Professor Karen Block
Associate Director of the Child and
Community Wellbeing Program,
Melbourne School of Population and
Global Health
University of Melbourne

Dr Kate Reynolds
Professor of Educational Psychology and
Learning
Faculty of Education
University of Melbourne

Dr Farida Fozdar
Associate Professor of Anthropology and
Sociology
University of Western Australia

Dr John van Kooy
Social Researcher
Australian Institute of Family Studies

Staff:

Anthea Hancocks
Chief Executive Officer

Trish Prentice
Senior Researcher

Dr Rouven Link
Senior Research Analyst

Celia Tran
Communications and Community
Engagement Manager

Phoebe Johnston
Research Analyst



  scanlon institute
info@scanloninstitute.org.au
scanloninstitute.org.au