



Lyn Craig, Director of SPRC 2016–2017

SPRC has now been a leading influential fixture in social policy research in Australia for forty years. In that time its impact on policy and on public debate, both nationally and internationally, has been huge. Originally set up and funded by the Department of Social Security to conduct research into welfare, poverty and social inclusion, over the years the Centre's expertise and reach expanded to include multiple important policy areas such as disability, care, housing, mental health and wellbeing, indigenous people, families and communities. Over its forty years, SPRC has established itself as a trusted public voice, a go-to source of authoritative

information, recognized for taking a fundamentally ethical and humanitarian approach to tackling pressing issues of social justice and inequality of all kinds.

SPRC's longevity and continuing impact is a testament to its excellent staff, its sense of purpose and to its adaptability. Surviving and thriving for forty years hasn't been easy; within a university structure it is highly challenging to maintain a for-purpose research centre that engages and partners with multiple cross-sector stakeholders, and with the community, and delivers team-based empirically-focused research outputs. A central challenge has been to produce these outcomes and continually adapt while also ensuring staff can fulfil both Centre and university requirements and access opportunities for academic advancement. Balancing the constraints of contingent funding and the needs of staff for career and expertise development is complex. It is a great tribute to SPRC that so many excellent researchers have not only passed through the Centre, going on to influential positions in government, non-government and academia, but also that so many have stayed, making long-term prestigious careers in its unique environment.

My own work experience at SPRC was eclectic, much like the Centre itself. I came to SPRC in 2001 as a PhD student and, after graduating, sequentially occupied every academic position from Research Associate to Scientia Professor, and have served as both Deputy Director and Director of the Centre. It was an interesting ride. While the view in many ways quite different from each of these vantage points, some things were constant, centrally the hard work and commitment of my colleagues. A particular challenge was that over time the university's perception of its value and contribution changed, and so did its expectations of the Centre. Sometimes the push was for adaptation that SPRC could not make while staying true to its essential core. But to its enormous credit, SPRC time and again proved itself resilient, with a unique conception of itself and its mission that has survived intact.

Impressively, the Centre has retained its focus on doing excellent research that can make a practical difference. Changing the world for the better is even important in these uncertain times. Many happy returns, and very best wishes for the future, SPRC.