



Annual Report
2022—2023



Acknowledgement of Country

The Sax Institute acknowledges the Gadigal People of the Eora nation as the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Sax Institute office is located. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise the strong cultural connections of all First Peoples to their land and water across Australia.

We value our partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and are committed to continuing our work together, enabling community-driven research that will make a difference to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

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Message from the Chair

This past year has been a time of significant change for the Sax Institute and the Board as we transition into a new era of evidence support.



I was pleased to oversee the recruitment and appointment in January 2023 of Dr Martin McNamara as our new Chief Executive Officer. A highly experienced health executive, Dr McNamara joined the Sax Institute in 2016 as Head of the Research Assets Division, and successfully steered many of the Institute's key programs. In 2018 he was appointed Deputy CEO.

Dr McNamara's appointment as CEO follows the retirement of Professor Sally Redman AO who led the Institute as CEO for 20 years from its inception in 2002.

The Board Members and I welcome Dr McNamara to his new leadership role. We look forward to working with him to build on the Sax Institute's already strong reputation in the health sector and to seize new opportunities to maximise the value we provide policy and decision makers.

This financial year saw the conclusion of the Institute's previous strategic plan. The development of a new plan for the next five years was a major focus for the

Board in 2022-23. The process involved a comprehensive review of how the Institute performed against the previous plan, consideration of papers on strategic issues developed and circulated by members of the Executive Team, and many workshop discussions at Board meetings to deliberate on how the strategy could be strengthened and refined.

I am pleased with the progress we have made in developing our plan and I am confident that we are on the right path to delivering on our mission to improve health and wellbeing, particularly through driving innovation and increasing the impact of the organisation's work nationally and internationally.

Throughout the year, the hallmark of the Institute's efforts has been a sharp focus on innovation. The 45 and Up Study has responded with agility to the need for faster evidence; our Decision Analytics team has been building powerful new tools to enhance decision making; and our Aboriginal Health team has supported

innovative Aboriginal-led projects to improve health and wellbeing. These are just a few of many examples of the Institute's ability to act quickly and creatively to facilitate the production of evidence to support policy development.

One project I would like to draw your attention to is our "Reflect" Reconciliation Action Plan, which was approved by Reconciliation Australia earlier this year and can now be found on our website. It describes the steps we need to take to prepare our organisation for reconciliation initiatives and is an opportunity to reflect on how the Institute can contribute to reconciliation and champion the importance of listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This Plan will shape our vision for reconciliation as an organisation.

The Institute also undertook a major staff survey in 2022, which established

benchmarks for work culture and staff satisfaction. It found that around 9 out of 10 employees are proud to work at the Institute and would recommend it as a great place to work. I'm proud of the excellent feedback we received in this survey, which is directly informing our future development and providing staff with a voice to define the type of organisation we are.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Board members for their advice and guidance, particularly through the process of developing the new five-year strategic plan. I extend my thanks also to all Sax Institute staff members for their dedication and hard work throughout the year, and of course to our new CEO, Dr McNamara, for his vision and leadership.



Professor Ian Olver AM
Chair



Farewell and thanks to Professor Sally Redman AO

Professor Sally Redman AO was the CEO of the Sax Institute from its inception in 2002 until her retirement in December 2022. Professor Redman's commitment to improving health and health services through the better use of research is reflected in our dynamic and broad portfolio of programs. In 2013, she was appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia for her distinguished service to public health. We pay tribute to Professor Redman for her inspirational leadership.

Message from the CEO

A focus on innovation is at the heart of our work at the Sax Institute and underpins the ambitious plans we have for the future.



In January 2023 I was honoured to be appointed CEO of the Sax Institute following the retirement of Professor Sally Redman. Professor Redman led the Institute since its creation 20 years ago. I want to pay tribute to Professor Redman not just for her extraordinary leadership in building the capabilities of the Institute, but also for the exceptional support and mentorship she offered to everyone at the Institute, myself included.

A focus on bold ideas and innovation was critical to the success of the Institute under Professor Redman – and that is reflected in the many achievements of this past year detailed in this report. These include innovative new approaches in dynamic simulation modelling; in Aboriginal health; in our evaluation services; and in new ways to leverage the immense potential of our 45 and Up Study.

We have also initiated a number of innovative projects that will have significant impact in the future. A Hospital Digital Twin is under development that will provide a powerful, data-driven simulation tool to decision makers to support operational and strategic decisions.

Our Policy Impact Labs initiative is a collaborative process to help decision makers and diverse stakeholders solve complex policy challenges. Policy Impact Labs leverage our

unique expertise in research translation to bridge the gap between evidence and policy.

A new initiative in our 45 and Up Study provides an enduring linkage across a range of data sets which has become a powerful new tool for researchers working on chronic conditions. The linkage brings together the 45 and Up Study with 10 key datasets and reduces the set-up time for new research projects by up to 80%.

These exciting initiatives are very much aligned with the new five-year strategic plan we have been developing throughout the year. Our core mission remains the same: to improve health and wellbeing by driving the use of evidence. Our new plan will further build the profile of the organisation and ensure that we are the partner of choice to tackle complex health challenges. Driving innovation is fundamental to meeting these objectives and ensuring that our work makes a real difference to people's lives.

I thank everyone at the Institute for the incredible work they have done this year, as well as the Board and our network of Members for their invaluable advice and guidance.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Martin McNamara'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light grey background.

Dr Martin McNamara
CEO

At a glance



82,564

health surveys

sent out to 45 and Up Study participants in 2022-23



49

papers published

in our journal *Public Health Research & Practice*



650

researchers

actively using the SURE platform as at 30 June 2023



69

Sax Institute Members

located around Australia at 30 June 2023



900+

researchers, policy makers and practitioners

collaborate with The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre



3,027

subscribers

to *Evidence Matters*, our monthly newsletter



Sustainable solutions. Powered by evidence.

Our mission is to improve health and wellbeing by driving the use of research in policies, programs and services.

Over the past 20 years, the Sax Institute has built an impressive portfolio of products and services to support decision making and address challenges in the health sector. Our expertise ranges from complex modelling through to rapid evaluation and knowledge synthesis, and the use of large-scale datasets. We are leaders in co-production, forging close partnerships in key health areas.

We specialise in identifying and mobilising evidence regardless of the health problem. This approach gives us independence and an ability to bring new thinking to ongoing problems. It makes us well-suited to address the hard-to-anticipate policy challenges that will emerge in coming years.

About the Sax Institute

The Sax Institute is an independent, not-for-profit organisation and a registered charity that improves health and wellbeing by driving better use of evidence in policies, programs and services.

The Institute works with governments, health organisations, research organisations and a network of experts nationwide to analyse policy problems and find the best evidence-based solutions.

We have an international reputation in providing evidence support that helps decision makers analyse and address complex issues in public health.

The Institute's funding is derived from a mix of government, non-government, philanthropic and competitive grant sources.

We are:

- **Established to work at the interface** between the worlds of research and decision making
- **Trusted by agencies and researchers** and valued for our independence
- **Strengthened by close connections** to our Member network of almost 70 research centres, universities and other organisations that are leaders in research

We provide evidence support that focuses on improving the health of Australians. We help put evidence at the heart of decision making.

What we do:

The 45 and Up Study

Australia's largest ongoing study into health and ageing

Secure Unified Research Environment

Australia's most trusted platform for sharing and analysing sensitive data

Reviews and dialogues

Helping decision makers to find the best evidence-based solutions

Aboriginal health

Collaborations to improve the health of Aboriginal communities

Modelling for decision support

Testing the effect of potential new policies using dynamic systems modelling

Evaluations and support

Helping policy agencies understand the value, impact and outcome of programs and policies.

The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre

A partnership approach to chronic disease prevention

Public Health Research & Practice

Australia's leading health policy journal

Promote the
use of credible
evidence in policy
and practice





Honouring health research with real-world impact



Pictured L-R: Professor Ian Olver AM, Sax Institute Chair; Dr Archana Koirala, award winner; Dr Martin McNamara, Sax Institute CEO; Dr Michelle Barakat-Johnson award winner; Professor Sally Redman AM, Sax Institute outgoing CEO, at the 2022 Research Action Awards.

The Sax Institute’s annual Research Action Awards recognise early and mid-career researchers whose work has made a direct impact on health policy, programs or service delivery.

In 2022, our two Research Action Award winners led important research projects in very different areas of public health.

Dr Archana Koirala, of the **National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance**, won her award for her outstanding work on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australian children; while Dr Michelle Barakat-Johnson, of the **Susan Wakil School of Nursing and**

Midwifery, University of Sydney, was honoured for her highly innovative work on the prevention and management of hospital-acquired pressure injuries.

The awards were presented to our winners by the Sax Institute’s Board Chair, Professor Ian Olver AM, at a special ceremony held in Sydney attended by over 100 senior policy makers, research leaders and academics.

Established in 2015, the Research Action Awards reflect the Institute’s steadfast support for health research that has real relevance for decision makers involved in policies, programs and services that improve people’s health and wellbeing.



Dr Archana Koirala,

National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS)

Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr Koirala led a team of researchers to track and understand COVID-19 transmission within schools and early learning centres. Working with researchers from NCIRS, NSW Health and NSW Department of Education, Dr Koirala and her colleagues found that transmission rates in educational settings were much lower than in others such as households and recreational facilities. Her research also showed that children were not the key drivers of transmission and were less likely to be affected by severe COVID-19.

“Our research had direct bearing on an unfolding public health crisis,” said Dr Koirala. “It was a new paradigm of working together with decision makers, where the research not only fed directly into policy decisions but also informed the public in real time.”

This work provided critical real-time data to policy makers and empowered them to keep schools open during times of COVID-19 community transmission, reinforcing the use of mitigation measures and vaccination to limit the spread of COVID-19.

“I’m really proud of the fact that by doing this work with the children and their families, **we were able to return children to school** in a COVID-safe way as early as possible.”



Dr Michelle Barakat-Johnson,

Susan Wakil School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Sydney

Dr Barakat-Johnson’s work addresses hospital-acquired pressure injuries – more commonly known as bedsores – which can have a significant impact on patient health and wellbeing while also being largely preventable.

“A lot of people don’t know that **pressure injuries are quite a serious complication** in hospitals, so I’m really pleased that this important issue is getting recognition through this award.”

Her team’s research, involving 1,500 clinicians and 1,600 patients, focused on one NSW local health district where the incidence of hospital-acquired pressure injuries had increased substantially.

Findings from her work guided the implementation of innovative, evidence-based approaches that reduced the number of hospital-acquired pressure injuries across the district by 51%. This success led to the creation of a state-wide pressure injury collaborative which provides clinicians with the guidance needed to develop effective, ward-based pressure injury prevention plans.



Publishing policy-relevant research: Obesity, wellbeing and ageing

***Public Health Research & Practice (PHRP)*, the Sax Institute's open-access, peer-reviewed journal, celebrated a milestone this year achieving its first Impact Factor of 4.4, placing it in the top 20% of health policy journals globally.**

This impressive ranking follows the publication of four high-quality issues throughout 2022-23, contributing new research and perspectives on topics including obesity, the wellbeing economy and healthy ageing.

A special issue exploring actions needed to address obesity was published in the lead up to the **International Congress on Obesity** in Melbourne in October 2022.

The issue, produced in partnership with the **Health and Social Care Unit at Monash University** and supported by **VicHealth**, was the focus of an expert panel discussion at the Congress and contributed to calls for collaborative action on obesity.

The PHRP December 2022 issue reflected on how the Sax Institute's 45 and Up Study, Australia's largest ongoing study of health and ageing, has impacted health policy and practice.

Researchers and policy experts acknowledged the impact that the Study has had on our understanding of health issues from heart disease and physical activity to cancer and COVID-19.

The journal's most recent issue focused on wellbeing at a time when governments globally are looking to reframe the way they measure success and growth.

World leaders in the field contributed to the issue, including an exploration of the concept of a 'wellbeing economy' and the value of a whole-of-government approach to address complex social, environmental and public health challenges.

Just weeks after the issue was published, the **Australian Government Treasury** released the "Measuring What Matters Statement" – the first iteration of Australia's national wellbeing framework, demonstrating the timeliness of the issue.



4.4 Impact Factor

PHRP received its first Impact Factor in June 2023, placing it in the top 20% of health policy journals globally. The Impact Factor is an independent international index run by analytics company Clarivate.

National engagement through the Sax Forum

The Sax Forum, our national network of expertise and collaboration, has continued to foster new ways of working together with our Members.

A key benefit of membership with the Sax Institute is the opportunity to attend Sax Forum events and contribute to discussions on key policy areas.

This year, the Forum focused on health services research and its ability to future-proof our health system. An online event was held in August 2022 to introduce a new project: the Health Services Research Initiative (HSRI).

Australia is currently facing extraordinary challenges in providing health and aged care services, so there is an urgent need for evidence that informs the health system changes that will be needed for the future.

The HSRI will consider the contribution that health services research can make to future-proofing our health system and share these findings with decision makers.

Members of the HSRI gave presentations at the Forum, including: Professor Henry Brodaty AO, Co-Director of the **Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing** at **UNSW Sydney**; Professor Jane Hall AO, Director of Strategy, **Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation** at **UTS Sydney**; and Professor Sally Green, Professorial Fellow in the **Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences** at **Monash University**.

This was the first of a series of Sax Forums, with more planned in the future. The event had a highly interactive discussion between panellists and the audience, touching on issues such as the need for researchers to have access to large scale data assets as well as the value of embedding research in health services.

This discussion helped shape the direction of the initiative, with a group emerging from the Forum who are working towards sharing its findings and recommendations.

Our Members are leaders in public health and health services research, and include universities, institutes and research groups.



Celebrating 15 years of partnership in Aboriginal health



Pictured L-R: Darryl Wright AM, Associate Professor Michelle Dickson, Jamie Newman, Professor Hasantha Gunasekera, Professor Sandra Eades, Professor Kelvin Kong, Professor Emily Banks AM, Sandra Bailey and Professor Jonathan Craig at the 15-year anniversary event held in February 2023.

This year we marked 15 years of partnership in improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children with a special celebration.

Improving Aboriginal health outcomes is a major focus of the Sax Institute. We work collaboratively with Aboriginal communities, researchers and health professionals to enable Aboriginal-led research that improves the lives and health of Aboriginal people and their communities.

Since 2008, the Institute has worked in partnership with the **Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council** and a number of **Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services** across NSW on the Study of Environment on Aboriginal Resilience and

Child Health (SEARCH), Australia's largest long-term study of the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children in non-remote areas.

Owned and led by Aboriginal people, SEARCH has followed over 1,600 Aboriginal children and their families, providing a holistic picture of the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and their families to drive real improvements in health services.

In February this year, Aboriginal leaders, community members, health researchers across many disciplines and policy makers came together at a special event to celebrate the achievements of SEARCH. Key takeaways were the incredibly positive impact SEARCH has had on communities, and its innovative model of Aboriginal-led research.



Pictured: Darryl Wright AM, CEO, Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation and Professor Sandra Eades.

Darryl Wright AM, CEO of SEARCH partner **Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation in South Western Sydney** and a Dunghutti man, spoke passionately about the problem of inadequate housing for Aboriginal people and the impact on their health.

“We’re trying to make our people well and healthy, but then they’re going back to unhealthy houses that are doing them no favours,” he said.

Informed by SEARCH data on housing conditions for Aboriginal people in South Western Sydney, Darryl and the Tharawal Board set up the **Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation**, which has provided **more than 100 new houses** for the local Aboriginal community.

LaToya Terry, a Wiradjuri woman from the **Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation (RivMed)** spoke about the positive impact SEARCH had on ear health in her Aboriginal community.

“Before SEARCH, we knew there was a problem with ear health in our kids. But without evidence, it was hard to get any funding or action from the government. We were able to get the evidence and funding to



Pictured: LaToya Terry, Executive Assistant, Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation.

get our children to see a specialist and were able to set up a hearing room and regular speech assessments.”

Ms Terry also spoke about the importance of SEARCH in addressing food security issues in Aboriginal communities. SEARCH brought together food relief and other local organisations linked to the food system in the Murrumbidgee area to respond to food insecurity. SEARCH also partnered with RivMed to develop ways to improve food security in the longer term.

To date, 70 researchers from over 25 institutions have worked in partnership with Aboriginal communities to produce research with data collected from SEARCH participants. This collaboration has made SEARCH the most widely published source of data about Aboriginal health in Australia.

Research using SEARCH data will continue to inform the development of innovative programs and policy changes to support the future health of Aboriginal children and their families.

Our partnership with Aboriginal communities and researchers will continue to be a strong focus for the Institute as we work on a broad range of topics including healthy ageing, cancer and child development.

45 and Up data informs

lung cancer screening

Data from the 45 and Up Study has informed important research on lung cancer, which contributed to the federal government’s landmark decision in May to fund the National Lung Cancer Screening Program.

The 45 and Up Study, Australia’s largest ongoing study of health and ageing, has supported numerous research projects on lung cancer by **The Daffodil Centre**. The Daffodil Centre is a joint venture of **Cancer Council NSW** and the **University of Sydney**. Cancer Council NSW is a founding partner of the 45 and Up Study.

Associate Professor Marianne Weber, head of the Daffodil Centre’s Lung Cancer Policy and Evaluation stream, is thrilled with the government’s announcement and is pleased that Australian data played a role.



“I’m confident that decisions about lung cancer screening are grounded in real-life experiences. Using Australian evidence like the 45 and Up Study wherever possible assures us of the right way forward.”

Associate Professor Marianne Weber,
Lead, Lung Cancer Policy and Evaluation
The Daffodil Centre



“The 45 and Up Study has been around long enough to show us not only who’s at risk of cancer, but who goes on to get cancer and what factors impact diagnosis and treatment patterns,” she said.

“The Study also has the potential to help measure the impact of lung cancer screening when it’s introduced.”

It’s estimated that screening will save 500 lives a year because more people will be diagnosed with early-stage lung cancer. Five-year relative survival for lung cancer at stage one is 68%, while for lung cancer at stage four it’s just 3%.

A recent Daffodil Centre paper, published in the *British Journal of Cancer*, showed that lung cancer screening could be a cost-effective means of saving lives.

Supported by a grant from the **Medical Research Future Fund**, researchers used the 45 and Up Study cohort of more than 250,000 people to estimate the proportion of Australians eligible for lung cancer screening, as well as their underlying risk of lung cancer.

The 45 and Up Study’s linkages to numerous health databases also provided researchers with comprehensive health-system costs associated with lung cancer.



14,533

academic citations of
45 and Up Study research



877

researchers have used the
45 and Up Study



18

years of 45 and Up Study
survey data

Showcasing research that makes a difference

In November 2022, the Sax Institute helped bring together researchers, clinicians and decision makers to celebrate impactful research at the National Health and Medical Research Council’s Research Translation Long Weekend.

The in-person event, **Sydney Showcase**, was one of several satellite events held around Australia to support the **NHMRC’s** online symposium and offered a hybrid conference experience as the country emerged from COVID-19 disruptions.

The Institute’s core business is enabling the use of research in policies, programs and services. An important way to do this is by sharing examples of effective research with our community.

We joined forces with two Sydney-based research translation centres, **Sydney Health Partners** and **Maridulu Budyari Gumal (SPHERE)**, to co-host the event at Sydney University and promote it to our networks.

Presenters included Professor Sandy Middleton from **Australian Catholic University**, Professor Luke Wolfenden from the **University of Newcastle**, Clinical Associate Professor Merran Findlay from the **University of Sydney** and Adjunct Professor Andrew Milat, Director of Evidence and Evaluation at the **NSW Ministry of Health**.

The event was attended by more than 100 people who were given the opportunity to make new connections and share their knowledge in networking sessions.

Members of the Institute’s Aboriginal Health team helped lead informal discussion on working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities. Other networking sessions focused on rural and remote communities, people living with disabilities, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Our collaborative efforts led to insightful presentations from researchers whose work had impacted practice and policy at international, national and state levels.

Pictured L-R: Associate Professor Natalie Taylor, Professor Luke Wolfenden, Dr Heather Shepherd, Professor Sandy Middleton, Clinical Associate Professor Merran Findlay and Adjunct Professor Andrew Milat at the Sydney Showcase, held in November 2022.





Putting key public health issues on the national agenda

The Sax Institute's peer-reviewed journal, *Public Health Research & Practice* (PHRP), addressed important public health issues such as tobacco control, alcohol advertising and obesity prevention through its papers and the media coverage they generated.

This year, our journal helped shape the debate in these areas:

- Reducing the stigma around obesity and the need for obesity prevention strategies in adolescence
- Alcohol advertising on social media and its lack of age-restricted controls
- Restricting youth access to non-prescription vaping products.

The research papers and commentary published in PHRP on these issues attracted national media attention, including interviews on *ABC Radio National* and *ABC Online*, as well as articles in *The Australian*, *Guardian Australia*, *The Medical Republic*, *The Canberra Times* and *The Conversation*.

A special issue on 'reframing the obesity narrative' published in October 2022 attracted more than 180 items of media coverage, including articles on the need to address the stigma around obesity and the urgent need for prevention strategies to address obesity in adolescence.

A paper by researchers from **Cancer Council Western Australia** published in mid-2022 revealed that many alcohol advertisements on social media did not have required age-restriction controls – meaning they could be accessed by minors.

In response, several major alcohol manufacturers acted swiftly to activate age controls on their platforms.

A paper published in March 2023 calling for sales of non-prescription vaping products to be banned to curb uptake of e-cigarettes by young people also contributed to national debate and policy action.

In May, the Australian Government announced restrictions on the importation of vaping products in a bid to address public health concerns about their use.

Drive innovative
and impactful
approaches
to addressing
complex policy
challenges





Powerful modelling to support

health system decisions



The Sax Institute's modelling tools have tackled complex challenges in public hospitals and the community mental health sector this year.

Our work helped hospitals in NSW prepare for surges in COVID-19 patients. We collaborated with the **NSW Health Agency for Clinical Innovation** and brought critical data together to model patient flow across 25 different hospitals in NSW during a wave of COVID-19.

We also helped decision makers test the cost-effectiveness of mental health initiatives. A partnership with the **Mental Health Commission NSW** created a modelling tool that tests 18 different community-based programs and services to see which provides the greatest benefits.

The Institute's Decision Analytics team draws on the best research expertise to develop dynamic simulation models which work as an interactive 'what-if' tool for decision makers. We work closely with policy makers and service providers so they can apply the tool's insights.

Helping hospitals manage COVID-19

When a hospital experienced a surge of patients with COVID-19, the impacts were felt not just in the emergency department and intensive care unit, but across the entire hospital. Significant stress was put on hospital bed availability.

The Institute provided insight on this issue to NSW hospitals with a sophisticated modelling tool developed in partnership with the **NSW Health Agency for Clinical Innovation**.

The tool simulated the **movement of patients through 25 hospitals** in NSW. Our Decision Analytics team brought together **a large amount of data** from hospitals and **consulted with clinicians and hospital managers**.

The modelling tool tested how the impact of a COVID-19 wave could be minimised by strategies such as reducing or outsourcing elective surgeries, or increasing hospital beds available to patients leaving the emergency department.

This project built on earlier modelling work done by the Institute, which was focused on intensive care units.

Christine Whittall, Director of Decision Analytics and Innovation at the Sax Institute, said that the power of the technology lies in its ability to provide a systems-level view.

“A decision-maker can understand the flow-on effects of making one change in a hospital system,” Whittall said. “The value of this tool goes beyond COVID-19, as there are many issues affecting patient flow. We’re really excited about future opportunities.”

Supporting community mental health

Decision makers in mental health face significant challenges in determining which initiatives to invest in. The sector is complex, with workforce capacity restrictions, changing population needs and varying degrees of supporting evidence.

Our Decision Analytics team is helping to navigate these challenges with a modelling tool that tests which community-based initiatives provide the greatest benefits.

Produced in partnership with the **Mental Health Commission NSW**, this tool maps NSW’s current mental health system and tests the potential impacts of 19 community-based initiatives, ranging from primary school wellbeing programs to social rehabilitation and housing support.

The tool expands on previous work between the Institute and the Commission, drawing on a range of academic and administrative data as well as lived experiences.

Real-time outcomes are shown across **health, social and economic domains**. Users can see the impact an initiative may have on **hospitalisation and GP visits**, as well as the impact on **school attendance or productivity**.

Julie Dixon, Director of System Reform, Mental Health Commission NSW, said the expertise of the Institute and the Commission came together to create a tool that exceeds expectations and will hopefully be developed further to facilitate collaboration across multiple stakeholders and sectors.

“We’ve listened to each other and built a good partnership though time and effort,” said Dixon. “We couldn’t have done it without each other.”

New generation of rapid surveys helps shape health policy

We have developed an innovative way to provide rapid response to emerging research priorities using the 45 and Up Study.

45 and Up Health Compass is our new program of shorter, topic-focused surveys that are sent online to a segment of the 45 and Up Study cohort. More than twenty-one thousand people from the Study's cohort were recruited in 2022 and have been sent three surveys in the 2022-23 year.

Survey questions were developed in consultation with stakeholders from government, health organisations and advisory bodies, and reflected the emerging priorities of these groups, said the Institute's Director of Research Assets and Innovation, Dr Kerrin Bleicher.

"45 and Up Health Compass surveys are being used to respond to data gaps or to address new research topics that have urgent relevance to policy decisions that affect older Australians," said Dr Bleicher.

Health themes covered by the surveys so far are wide-ranging, including questions on influenza vaccination, mental health, head injuries, and experiences of end-of-life care and bereavement. The survey data can be linked with other survey data from the 45 and Up Study and a range of administrative datasets for health research.

Rapid data collection is at the heart of this program. Surveys take less than 15 minutes to complete and are submitted online to allow for fast data cleaning and collation.

This means that survey results can be available less than a month after the close of each survey.

The other key attribute of 45 and Up Health Compass is the highly engaged cohort of older Australians. Response rates to surveys have been on average higher than 90%, which is an outstanding result.

The cohort is also diverse, with an age range between 58 and 100 years. 12% of participants are the most disadvantaged socio-economic group, while 8% live in



"This cohort is really passionate about health and they're not afraid to answer questions on sensitive issues. Their generosity will have a significant impact on future healthcare and policies."

Dr Kerrin Bleicher

Director, Research Assets and Innovation
Sax Institute



outer regional, remote and very remote areas. 14% of participants identify as carers, while 3% live in aged care facilities or retirement villages. Almost half of all participants have more than two chronic conditions.

The results of 45 and Up Health Compass surveys have proved insightful and influential in policy decisions.

The second survey in this series was harnessed by the **Health and Social Policy branch** of the **NSW Ministry of Health** to examine attitudes and experiences of end-of life care to inform decision making.

Findings have been used within the Health and Social Policy branch to drive projects on patient and carer experience.

Results have also been shared with the **Bureau of Health Information**, the **Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence**, and a **National Data Development Working Group** in palliative care.

The methodology, question set and other learnings from this survey will also help inform other population-level surveys.

45 and Up Health Compass emerged from a series of rapid surveys rolled out by the 45 and Up Study in the pandemic. These surveys, called COVID Insights, were focused on people's health and wellbeing during the pandemic, and attitudes to COVID-19.

"The 45 and Up Study team has refined our process around the rapid survey model," Dr Bleicher said.



21,390

people recruited to 45 and Up Health Compass



90%

average response rate to surveys



30

days to make survey results available

Delivering rapid analysis with real-world impact

The Sax Institute has delivered evidence reviews that have real-world impact on health policy, including the planning of drug rehabilitation facilities and the development of strategies to reduce the disease burden of hepatitis B.

Evidence reviews are fast and accurate summaries of evidence that answer a specific question on health services or health policy.

This year, our reviews have influenced local decision making as well as informed broader discussions of health care policy.

These successful outcomes reflect our expertise in knowledge brokering, our ability to speak the languages of both research and policy. We make sure that the right research questions are asked, that the best research team is brought on board to answer those questions, and that the findings are presented in an accessible format for decision makers.

Evidence to support development of rehabilitation centres

The Institute was commissioned by the **Centre for Alcohol and Other Drugs** within the **NSW Ministry of Health**, to conduct a rapid review of evidence on the community impacts of residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation services.

This kind of review, called an Evidence Snapshot, is delivered within a few weeks.

“Our expertise helped to refine the focus of the research question which helped uncover relevant research,” said Eileen Goldberg, the Institute’s Deputy Director, Evidence Connect.

Ten relevant studies were identified, which investigated issues such as community perception and impact, property values and crime rates.

A theme across many of the studies was that initial concerns around the potential impacts of drug treatment facilities, including residential rehabilitation, were largely unfounded or did not eventuate over time.





This evidence may influence where residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation facilities are built in the future. It will also be used to support the development of other NSW Ministry of Health funded services.

Improving hepatitis B diagnosis and treatment

The **NSW Ministry of Health** commissioned an evidence review from the Sax Institute on interventions that reduce the disease burden of hepatitis B.

There are around 220,000 Australians living with hepatitis B, which can lead to life-threatening liver conditions if not properly managed. However, one-quarter of Australians with the virus don't know they have it.

The Sax Institute brought together experts from the **Kirby Institute** and the **Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity** to co-author the review, known as an Evidence Check. An Evidence Check provides a more detailed analysis than an Evidence Snapshot and is completed within months.

Sixty-one studies from the past 10 years were analysed, and the review identified strategies that **improved screening rates, linkage to care and vaccination** for hepatitis B.

Community education was found to increase testing rates and linkage to care, particularly when delivered face-to-face. Interventions with on-site testing and vaccinations were also successful.

“This Evidence Check is important because it looked at interventions around hepatitis B in Australia and other countries,” says co-author Associate Professor Behzad Hajarizadeh from The Kirby Institute. “We can see what has worked, and what we should try next.”

Our review, along with consultation with communities and key partners, has supported the development of the **NSW Hepatitis B Strategy 2023-2026**.

The Strategy has set targets that 90% of people with hepatitis B should be diagnosed and 100% of people living with the virus receive care by 2026.

Strengthen
capabilities in
the mobilisation,
translation and
implementation of
evidence







10 years of collaboration in prevention

The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre celebrated a milestone this year with a decade of remarkable achievements since the Sax Institute led its establishment in 2013.

More than 900 researchers, policy makers and practitioners are now part of the Prevention Centre network. All are working to strengthen national and international evidence on the value of prevention and helping make the case for greater investment in prevention.

The partnerships nurtured by the Prevention Centre over the past decade will play a vital role in further strengthening Australia's prevention systems. The Institute continues to support the ongoing work of the Prevention Centre as it enters its next phase in 2024.

A decade of partnerships and success

The Prevention Centre was one of two **National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Partnership Centres for Better Health** announced in 2013 to improve the availability and relevance of research evidence to support health decision makers.

Over the past 10 years, the Prevention Centre has innovated and supported **policy-relevant research** as well as new approaches in **communication** and **research translation** for the prevention of chronic disease.

Our national partnerships and collaborations have developed new methods and tools for prevention that have been widely used around Australia and internationally, including systems thinking approaches, dynamic simulation modelling and scale-up initiatives.

These achievements were celebrated at the **Public Health Association of Australia's** (PHAA) Preventive Health Conference in May 2023. Professor Lucie Rychetnik, the Prevention Centre's Co-Director, shared insights from the network of researchers, practitioners and policy makers who have helped build an effective, equitable and empowered prevention system in Australia.

"Through our co-funding and co-design we have modelled an important partnership approach to tackle chronic disease, bringing jurisdictions, non-government organisations and universities together on complex problems," Professor Rychetnik said.



Pictured: Professor Lucie Rychetnik, Co-Director of the Prevention Centre, at the PHAA Preventive Health Conference.

The conference also showcased the work of many researchers in the Prevention Centre's network including members of the **Collaboration for Enhanced Research Impact (CERI)**. This year, 11 NHMRC Centres of Research Excellence connected with the Prevention Centre in the expanding CERI to align science communication, prevention research advocacy and capacity-building activities. CERI now represents more than 200 of Australia's leading prevention investigators.

Bringing researchers and policy makers together has ensured real-world policy and practice questions have informed our

research across a wide range of issues including overweight and obesity, healthy eating, priority populations, physical activity, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, liveability, primary care, mental health and wellbeing.

We continue to embed science communication across our work to enhance and support research impact. This work has contributed to a greater appreciation of the social, commercial and environmental determinants of health and the many co-benefits of prevention.

Co-designing the future of prevention policy

The Prevention Centre's co-designed workplan focuses on three priorities for chronic disease prevention research policy and practice:

- Build systems leadership for chronic disease prevention
- Incubate and embed new knowledge through applied partnership research for prevention policy and practice
- Accelerate the use of new knowledge and methods to inform policy and practice.

The many partnerships and collaborations nurtured by the Prevention Centre over the past decade provide an important opportunity to support significant change in the national prevention system through the **National Preventive Health Strategy, National Obesity Strategy, National Tobacco Strategy**, and the proposed **Australian Centre for Disease Control**.

"The next-generation Prevention Centre will continue to provide an important and unique contribution to the national infrastructure for prevention, and to support our shared goals to reduce premature deaths from chronic disease, reduce the incidence of chronic disease, and improve quality of life for those living with chronic diseases," Professor Rychetnik said.



A greater scope for program evaluation

This year, the Sax Institute has innovated its evaluation services, working in complex policy areas such as family and domestic violence and expanding beyond evaluation into program design.

The Institute's Evaluate team has partnered with federal and state agencies, as well as research institutions and non-governmental organisations, making an impact across a spectrum of health and social policy issues.

We've also expanded our service offering to program design support, a significant step that harnesses the wealth of knowledge across the Institute and ensures quality evaluation can be embedded at every stage of the program or policy design and evaluation continuum.

Supporting victim-survivors of family and domestic violence

The Evaluate team helped strengthen services for people experiencing family and domestic violence (FDV) with an evaluation of a **Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC)** pilot initiative, aimed at better supporting GPs and primary care staff to identify and assist victim-survivors of FDV.

Findings from the evaluation helped influence the Commonwealth's decision to allocate a further \$36.8 million to the initiative's expansion nationally. The Evaluate team has been re-commissioned by DoHAC to evaluate the pilot's expansion.

This is a strong example of how our evaluation methods can be adapted to programs that straddle health and social policy issues and operate at a national scale.

The pilot initiative was established by the federal government in 2019, in six **Public Health Networks** (PHNs) across three states – Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Each PHN could develop their own program, based on local needs.

The Institute, in partnership with **Australia's National Research Organisation** for Women's Safety, worked collaboratively with PHNs to evaluate the pilot. We used a mixed methods approach and various data sources including monitoring and outcome data, interviews, discussions and case studies.

The evaluation reported that the program was overwhelmingly perceived as useful and needed. Training was provided to more than 1700 GPs and other staff, and more than 250 FDV victim-survivor referrals were made by participating GPs.

Our innovative approach to evaluation

Over the past 12 months, the Institute has evolved the way we provide evaluation support.

We've consulted with our partners and learnt about the broad spectrum of needs around evaluation, particularly the need to start evaluation at an earlier point.

As a result, this year we've begun supporting our partners with program design and implementation. This ensures that our partners can implement their programs or policies and collect robust monitoring and outcome data that will lead to actionable evaluations down the track.

We also now offer a comprehensive design and evaluation service that caters to any need along the program design and evaluation continuum. This harnesses the expertise of teams across the Institute and the broader research and policy community.

Our service includes: using linked data to identify areas of need; conducting evidence reviews to identify solutions for these areas of need; facilitating collaborative processes to ensure co-designed programs and evaluations that meet stakeholders' needs; developing recommendations for the scale-up, implementation and evaluation of programs and policies; and providing advice on culturally safe evaluations.

Dr Alice Knight, the Institute's Director, Evaluate, said this is an exciting new phase that involves working with programs in youth justice, FDV, education and rural and remote communities.

"We are experts in evaluation and research methodologies and approaches, and we can master content relevant to any policy area, in a very short amount of time," Dr Knight said.

"Our other key strength is our ability to navigate the two worlds of research and policy confidently and respectfully. We can determine how best to help a client and meet their needs."

"The Sax Institute worked closely with us as we navigated this complex space and adapted their evaluation approach to match emerging areas of practice and need over the pilot period."

Susan Conaghan

Manager of Family Support Program
Development and Coordination
Brisbane South PHN



SURE at the forefront of innovative AI research

Our newly enhanced data platform, SURE, continues to enable high-impact health research in a secure environment.

The Sax Institute's Secure Unified Research Environment (SURE) is a powerful platform that allows data custodians to share critical health and other sensitive data with researchers safely and securely. Approved users securely access a wealth of linked data from hospitals, cancer registries, clinical trials, the use of government services and more, for their ethics-approved projects.

Since its inception in 2011, over 1,000 researchers and policy analysts, and over 30 data custodians from national and state governments, clinical registries and cohort studies, have used SURE for research projects that have tackled major health issues such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes and mental health. On June 30, 2023, over 650 users from academia, government agencies and private industry were working on 227 research projects using SURE.

Among major projects undertaken using SURE this year are two that involve emerging artificial intelligence (AI) applications for major health challenges. One project is using the **National Eye and Systemic Diseases Data Linkage Cohort** to explore the relationship between retinal vascular abnormalities and the risk of heart disease. Researchers are leveraging SURE's capabilities to conduct image analysis of retinal scans, with the aim of developing an AI risk assessment tool for cardiovascular disease.

Another innovative AI project underway this year is the **ECHO project**, which is using SURE to test AI-powered interpretations of echocardiogram images, compared with those of experienced clinicians. This research will shed light on the reliability and suitability of using AI in clinical practice.

A third significant project begun this year involves the **Centre of Research Excellence in Medicines Intelligence (MI-CRE)**, an initiative of **UNSW Medicine and Health's School of Population Health** that is



“By facilitating research into complex and pressing health challenges, SURE is making a major contribution to improving people’s future health and wellbeing.”

Matthew Gorringe

Senior Director, Data and Research Services
Sax Institute



delivering real-world evidence on the use of medicines in Australia. MI-CRE is using SURE to trial new ways to streamline researcher access to health data to speed up research.

Support for AI techniques

Significant improvements made during the recently completed SURE Enhancement Project have made SURE even easier, faster and more effective for researchers and data custodians to use. We have also provided additional support for SURE users working with emerging AI and machine learning techniques. Further enhancements in 2022-23 included a major boost in data storage capacity (from 400 to 600 terabytes) to accommodate our continued growth in users and to meet the requirements of data-hungry, next-generation biotech and image analysis projects.

This year we also further enhanced SURE's Curated Gateway, which controls all movement of data to and from SURE and ensures robust and logged approval of data

movements. Our enhancements maintain our high level of security while at the same time giving accredited researchers more direct control over how data is managed, reducing the time taken to access and report on data.

Other enhancements include more flexible computing resources, very high performance servers and reduced fees for users.

SURE has maintained and enhanced its information security capabilities to meet current and emerging threats. Enhancements in this area this year included replacing and strengthening SURE's firewalls against internet-originated intrusion, thanks to a grant from the **Population Health Research Network** (PHRN). Our information management security system is fully ISO 27001 2013 certified and audited annually.

Independently managed by the Sax Institute, SURE is operated as part of the PHRN with funding from the **Australian Government National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy** (NCRIS) and the NSW government.



1,100

users since SURE's inception



227

research projects currently underway



30+

data custodians sharing databases



Building knowledge with global partners

This year, we collaborated with international health organisations and research institutes to nurture future leaders in public health as well as initiate new research projects and share our knowledge.

We worked with Canada's **McMaster Health Forum** to support a group of university students who were awarded Queen Elizabeth Scholarships in Strengthening Health and Social Systems. The students were based at the Sax Institute for three months, where they gained experience in our health system and the Institute's programs.

We have a long-standing partnership with McMaster Health Forum, a globally renowned leader in addressing health and social issues through research evidence, including close connections with its director Professor John Lavis.

In the past year we've also collaborated with the **London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine** – a world-leading centre for research in public and global health – on potential research projects, which led to two of its experts presenting a seminar on innovative program evaluation to the Institute's Members.

We're also forging new partnerships with international counterparts. Delegates from two US-based health organisations, **AcademyHealth** and the **Commonwealth Fund**, visited the Institute as part of a study tour, where they learned about our approach to tackling complex policy problems with a view to future collaboration.

The Prevention Centre hosted a delegation from the **Danish Prevention Laboratory** who joined the Centre's **Science Communications Community of Practice** to learn about social media in prevention. The delegation also met with members of the **Collaboration for Enhanced Research Impact** to learn how collaboration can enhance impact.

Understanding food insecurity in Aboriginal communities in NSW

The Sax Institute partnered with Aboriginal communities to report on the prevalence and severity of food insecurity in NSW Aboriginal communities, which is guiding policy decisions to tackle this key issue.

This year, **Aboriginal Affairs NSW** commissioned a pilot survey on the prevalence and severity of food insecurity in NSW Aboriginal communities to guide policy in this area.

The survey was conducted by the Institute in partnership with three **Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services** located in outer-urban Sydney, regional NSW and very remote Western NSW.



“The key to improved food security is listening to the communities, providing them with a platform and supporting Aboriginal-led solutions.”

Simone Sherriff
Report co-author

Our collaboration led to the publication of a report in April 2023, which provides the first quantitative data on the prevalence and severity of food insecurity among Aboriginal households in NSW.

The survey found food insecurity in these communities is a far greater problem than previously realised. Of the 155 Aboriginal households surveyed in our study, an alarming 97% reported experiencing some degree of food insecurity.

Sixty percent of households reported being severely food insecure, meaning they had to skip meals, had reduced food intake and might have gone a day or more without food.

“This report highlights that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in NSW, across geographical locations that we surveyed, are extremely vulnerable to food insecurity,” write the report authors led by Jacqueline Davison, Simone Sherriff and Sumithra Muthayya of the Sax Institute.

Wotjobaluk woman and report co-author Simone Sherriff said food insecurity is a complex problem.

“There are a lot of social, economic and health injustices contributing to health disparities, which all stem from colonisation and the ongoing impacts of that,” she noted.

Following publication of the report in April 2023, Aboriginal Affairs NSW convened a food equity symposium to discuss its findings and the development of local solutions with local leaders, community organisations and government representatives.

Maximise the
impact of our
programs and
services







A new era of cardiovascular research

The 45 and Up Study is driving new insights into cardiovascular health with the establishment of a grant program for researchers, in partnership with the Heart Foundation.

Seven new projects began in 2022-23 under this grant program, with four more greenlighted and due to begin soon. All projects are undertaken by early and mid-career researchers, with each grant providing access to 45 and Up Study data as well as linkages to other health administrative data.

These new research projects focus on emerging issues in cardiovascular health, such as the uptake of new heart-protecting medicines for people with type II diabetes, and the risk of heart disease in people with cancer. There's also a focus on gaps in evidence for women's cardiovascular health, with research looking at the management of atrial fibrillation in women as well as the link between pregnancy complications and future cardiovascular disease.

Dr Kerrin Bleicher, Director of Research Assets and Innovation at the Institute, said these grants are a great way to build the capabilities of younger researchers and future-proof cardiovascular research.

“By providing early career researchers with robust data, it allows them to build skills in data analysis, developing an ethical framework and writing a publication, while at the same time producing valuable research.”

The rich data of the 45 and Up Study allows researchers to look at the **relationship between cardiovascular health and other chronic conditions** like cancer, diabetes and mental health, which is **essential for public health planning**.

The grant partnership, which began in 2020, builds on the close relationship between the Institute and the **Heart Foundation**. The Heart Foundation has been a valued partner of the 45 and Up Study since its inception in 2005.

Many grant recipients have also benefitted from a new data-access system for research into chronic conditions that has been piloted by the Institute. The new system links access to valuable datasets with the 45 and Up Study, significantly reducing administrative workload and shortening the time it takes for researchers to gain ethical approval for their projects and to access data.

Supporting healthy ageing in Aboriginal communities

The Sax Institute is proud to play a key role in a collaborative Aboriginal-led project that commenced this year to support Aboriginal people live longer and healthier lives.

Developed in partnership with three NSW **Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services** (ACCHSs), this ground-breaking evaluation project is exploring the impact of innovative, community-designed prevention programs by identifying ways to enhance their reach and uptake. It will

provide much needed evidence for decision making and policy around healthy ageing in Aboriginal communities.

The project is founded on our strong, long-term collaborations with ACCHSs, which over the past 15 years have delivered evidence that has led to significant improvements in Aboriginal health outcomes.

The project recognises that Aboriginal people experience many chronic and complex health conditions and at earlier ages compared with non-Indigenous people. It will build on existing culturally safe and responsive healthy ageing programs available through ACCHSs to deliver specific information on what is needed to increase uptake of these programs, and how new and existing programs can be optimised to have greater reach for their communities.

Yorta Yorta woman and project leader Sandra Bailey, Senior Adviser on Aboriginal Health at the Sax Institute, said that to be successful, programs aimed at improving the health of Aboriginal people need to be Aboriginal-led and reflect the knowledge and experience of Aboriginal communities, while also having outcome measures that are decided by communities to ensure they are relevant.

“It’s really important that prevention programs are accessible in Aboriginal communities and to highlight the amazing work that the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services do.”

The project is sharing insights and learnings with a wider network of ACCHSs and policy makers to identify where to target investment to improve uptake of prevention programs and have the greatest effect on Aboriginal health and quality of life.



“Prioritising Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing will help people feel comfortable and motivated in taking part, and will have flow-on effects on health outcomes.”

Sandra Bailey,
Senior Adviser, Sax Institute

Biospecimen data powering cancer and dementia research

The 45 and Up Study’s biospecimen collection is supporting research into genetic risk factors for common cancers and the link between our genes and cognitive decline.

This year, more than 7000 participants from the 45 and Up Study donated saliva samples to the **Australian Cancer Risk Study**, a national collaborative program led by **The Daffodil Centre** (a joint venture between **Cancer Council NSW** and the **University of Sydney**).

The Australian Cancer Risk Study aims to improve the risk-prediction and early detection of four common cancers: breast, prostate, colorectal cancers and melanoma. About 80,000 Australians are diagnosed with one of these cancers each year.

Researchers will analyse the DNA of saliva samples for links between genetic factors and cancer risk over time, in order to develop risk-prediction tools to improve screening and early detection of cancers.

Study participants have also donated samples to another project, **Maintain Your Brain**, led by **UNSW Sydney’s Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing**.

Almost 1000 blood and saliva samples have been provided for research on how a person’s genes may affect their attempts to prevent cognitive decline and delay the onset of dementia.

Biospecimens donated to these two projects will be added to the 45 and Up Study’s collection for future research.

Since 2009 we’ve been building a collection of biological samples from 45 and Up Study participants, linked to health and lifestyle data from the Study. It’s powering genomics research that will better understand what causes serious diseases, who is most at-risk and who can benefit from new treatments.



“The help of 45 and Up Study participants will be crucial to saving the lives of Australians in the future.”

Associate Professor Julia Steinberg
Co-Lead, Australian Cancer Risk Study

The Australian Cancer Risk Study was funded by the Medical Research Future Fund as part of the Genomics Health Futures Mission (#2007708).

Building expertise for meaningful knowledge exchange

Hundreds of high-profile people participated in our training program for policy makers, health decision makers and researchers in 2022-23.

Training events were held both online and in-person this year, providing greater opportunity for people outside of Sydney, as well as increased flexibility for all participants.

‘Building Successful Partnerships for Policy Relevant Research’, our online course, was held over three sessions in April. It was run by several renowned policy experts including Associate Professor Sarah Thackway.

The course provides early and mid-career researchers with an understanding of what’s important to policy agencies and how they use evidence. One participant noted that the course provided “clear, practical guidance that I can take away and put into action immediately”.

Sian Rudge, Head of Strategic Development at the Institute and course facilitator, said researchers have the opportunity to benefit from one-to-one advice relevant to their specific circumstances.

“Researchers get to walk in the shoes of policy makers,” Rudge said. “We’re helping to foster the skills needed for collaboration so that more research is used in policy and can have real-world impact.”

This year we’ve helped to **develop skills and knowledge in partnership building**, policy evaluation, evidence use and data analysis.

A highlight of this year’s program was the seminar on innovative approaches to evaluating policies and programs, delivered by Professor Richard Grieve and Associate Professor Stephen O’Neill from the **London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine**. Nearly 200 people attended the free online seminar, with more in-depth training on the topic planned in 2024.

Other training courses for policy makers covered critical appraisal of research and an introduction to program evaluation. Another training course for researchers was on data analysis skills for working with data from the Medicare Benefits Schedule and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.



Our people





Our Board

The Sax Institute is guided by a Board whose members collectively have excelled across a wide range of areas of professional and public life. The depth of skills, experience and judgment they bring are immensely valuable and continue to enrich our work and contributions.



Professor Ian Oliver AM *MB, MD, PhD*

Chair, Board of Directors

- Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences at the University of Adelaide and Professor, Discipline of Medicine, University of Notre Dame Australia
- Former Director of the Royal Adelaide Hospital Cancer Centre and CEO of Cancer Council Australia
- Former president of the Medical Oncology Group of Australia and the Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer



Kim Anderson *BA, PGDip LIS*

- Chair of People, Culture and Nominations Committee
- Non-Executive Director of ASX listed companies Carsales, Infomedia, InvoCare and SiteMinder



Dr Kerry Chant AO PSM *MBBS (Hons), FAFPHM, MHA, MPH*

- NSW Chief Health Officer
- Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health Division, NSW Ministry of Health



Robin Low *BCom, FCA, FAICD*

- Chair of Audit and Risk Management Committee
- Non-Executive Director of ASX listed companies Appen, AUB Group and IPH
- Non-Executive Director on not-for-profit entity boards including Guide Dogs NSW/ACT
- Former deputy chair of Audit and Assurance Standards Board and former PwC partner



Professor David Preen *BSc (Hons), PhD*

- Chair, Public Health at the School of Population and Global Health, University of Western Australia
- Holds an honorary position at Swansea University (UK).
- Current member of the NHMRC Research Committee and the Australian Health Ethics Committee
- Former Director of the UWA Centre for Health Services Research



Dr Lisa Studdert *PhD, MPS, B.Agr.Sc (Hons)*

- Head of Office at the Australian Government's Productivity Commission
- Former Deputy CEO at the National Disability Insurance Agency.
- Former Deputy Secretary at the Federal Department of Health (population health, aged care), and formerly with the Asian Development Bank (Health Specialist)



Professor David Whiteman AM *B Med Sc, MBBS (Hons), PhD, FAHMS, FAPHM*

- Medical epidemiologist, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute
- Senior Principal Research Fellow, National Health and Medical Research Council
- Fellow, Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences
- Fellow, Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine



Dr Martin McNamara *Ex Officio*

For full bio, see page 48

Committees

The work of the Board is supported by the following committees:

- **Audit and Risk Management Committee** Chair: Ms Robin Low
Members: Professor Ian Olver; Dr Martin McNamara; Ms Jane Stanton*
- **People, Culture and Nomination Committee** Chair: Ms Kim Anderson
Members: Professor Alison Jones; Dr Martin McNamara; Professor David Whiteman

*Non-Director

Our Executive Team

The Sax Institute draws from a breadth of skills and expertise across its staff. Our Executive Team has extensive experience across sectors including government, research and academia, the private sector, and not-for-profit sector.



Dr Martin McNamara *CEO*

Martin became the Institute's CEO in January 2023, after serving as Deputy CEO since 2018. Martin is also Chief Investigator of the Institute's 45 and Up Study. He has previously held a number of senior leadership roles at Commonwealth and state levels, spanning strategy and research to policy development and health system performance. Martin has a PhD in Public Health from the University of Sydney.



Justin Eccleston *Head, Business Services Transformation*

Justin has over 20 years' experience working in the research and not-for-profit sectors in the UK and Australia, including senior roles at the King's Fund in London and at national health charities in both countries. Justin leads the corporate functions spanning human resources, IT, commercial and facilities. He has a BSc (Hons) in Business Administration from the University of Bath.



Melinda Ewell *Head, Finance*

Melinda leads the Institute's Finance team and provides financial and regulatory guidance to the Institute's CEO and Board to support delivery of the Institute's Strategic Plan, as well as ensuring sustainability of the Institute's operations. Melinda has worked as a finance executive in the not-for-profit sector for more than a decade. Melinda is a Certified Practising Accountant and has a Master of Commerce from Western Sydney University.



Sian Rudge *Head, Strategic Development*

Sian works in the nexus between research and decision making, and in connecting decision makers with research and researchers. Before joining the Institute in 2011, Sian worked with the Centre for Aboriginal Health in the NSW Ministry of Health. She was previously a paediatric physiotherapist (B App Sc (Physio)) and holds a Master of International Public Health.



Professor Lucie Rychetnik *Co-Director, Prevention Centre*

Lucie provides the executive-level bridge between the Prevention Centre and the Institute. She contributes to the Institute's strategic direction, while also managing the Prevention Centre's strategy and day-to-day operations. Lucie also holds an appointment as Professor (public health) within the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney.



Dr Rebecca Tinning *Head, Programs*

Rebecca leads the Institute's Programs Division and is responsible for the operational management and development of the Institute's programs and capabilities. She has over 20 years' experience in health services research and policy, population health management, and health service innovation and delivery. Rebecca has a Professional Doctorate in Applied Public Health (DrPH) from the University of New South Wales.



Professor Sally Redman *CEO*
Resigned effective December 2022

Professor Sally Redman AO was the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Sax Institute for 20 years and a foundation member of the Prevention Centre's Leadership Executive. In 2022, Professor Redman retired after a lifelong commitment to improving health and health services through better use of research. She is recognised as an international leader in increasing the impact of research in policy, programs and service delivery.



Adam Cresswell *Head, Public Affairs*
Resigned effective April 2023

Adam led the Institute's Communications and Engagement Division and played a key role in managing the Institute's strategic public affairs. Adam spent many years as a health journalist in the UK and Australia. He has a Master of Health Policy from the University of Sydney, a Graduate Certificate in reporter journalism and a BA (Hons) in English and Related Literature.

Thanks to our Members

The Sax Institute's growing Member base ensures the Institute is well connected with a powerful public health network and world leading research expertise. Membership provides an invaluable avenue for collaboration to achieve common goals and pursue opportunities that may not be possible alone.

Members at 30 June 2023

- Australian Centre for Public and Population Health Research, University of Technology Sydney
- Australian Human Rights Institute, UNSW Sydney
- Australian Research Centre in Complementary and Integrative Medicine, University of Technology Sydney
- Burnet Institute
- Centre for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, The University of Newcastle
- Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation, University of Technology Sydney
- Centre for Health Informatics, Macquarie University
- Centre for Health Systems and Safety Research, Macquarie University
- Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing (CHeBA), UNSW Sydney
- Centre for Healthcare Resilience and Implementation Science, Macquarie University
- Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity, UNSW Sydney
- Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Sydney
- Centre for Women's Health Research, The University of Newcastle
- College of Health and Medicine, Australian National University
- Faculty of Health, Southern Cross University
- Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute, Flinders University
- Global Centre for Preventive Health and Nutrition (GLOBE), Deakin University
- Health Research Institute, University of Canberra
- Health Services and Practice Research Strength, University of Technology Sydney
- Hunter Medical Research Institute
- Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute
- Improving Palliative, Aged and Chronic Care through Clinical Research and Translation (IMPACCT), University of Technology Sydney
- Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research

- Institute for Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research, Monash University
- Macquarie University Centre for the Health Economy, Macquarie University
- Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Alfred Health
- Menzies Centre for Health Policy and Economics, The University of Sydney
- Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Griffith University
- Menzies School of Health Research
- National Ageing Research Institute
- National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, The University of Sydney
- National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney
- National Perinatal Epidemiology and Statistics Unit, UNSW Sydney
- Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA)
- Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, The University of Sydney
- Population Wellbeing and Environment Research Lab (PowerLab), University of Wollongong
- Prevention Research Collaboration, The University of Sydney
- Priority Research Centre for Health Behaviour, The University of Newcastle
- Psychiatry Research and Teaching Unit, School of Psychiatry, UNSW Sydney
- QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute
- Research Unit, Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network
- School of Clinical Sciences at Monash Health, Monash University
- School of Medicine and Public Health, The University of Newcastle
- School of Medicine Sydney, The University of Notre Dame Australia
- School of Population & Global Health, The University of Western Australia
- School of Population Health, UNSW Sydney
- School of Primary and Allied Health Care, Monash University
- School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University
- Simpson Centre for Health Services Research, UNSW Sydney
- Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney
- Surgical Outcomes Research Centre, The University of Sydney
- Susan Wakil School of Nursing and Midwifery, The University of Sydney
- Sydney Dental School, The University of Sydney
- Sydney School of Public Health, The University of Sydney
- The Cancer Council NSW
- The Daffodil Centre, Cancer Council NSW and The University of Sydney
- The Garvan Institute of Medical Research
- The George Institute for Global Health
- The Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney
- The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, The University of Sydney
- The University of Newcastle
- The University of Notre Dame Australia
- The University of Sydney
- University Centre for Rural Health – North Coast, The University of Sydney, University of Wollongong, Western Sydney University, Southern Cross University
- University of New England
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Wollongong
- UNSW Sydney
- Western Sydney University

Financial details at a glance





As at 30 June 2023:

Summary of Financial Performance	2023	2022	2021
Revenue	13,980,500	14,147,046	15,148,669
Government stimulus grant			812,000
Expenses	(14,087,900)	(14,711,500)	(14,877,100)
Underlying surplus / (deficit)	(107,400)	(564,454)	1,083,569
Property, plant and equipment (PPE) depreciation	(481,700)	(540,400)	(577,500)
Capital grants	287,500	274,954	301,931
Non-operating surplus / (deficit)	(194,200)	(265,446)	(275,569)
Surplus / (deficit) for the year	(301,600)	(829,900)	808,000

Summary of Financial Position	2023	2022	2021
Current assets	9,646,600	12,406,500	14,533,900
Non-current assets	2,815,800	3,633,000	4,630,000
Total assets	12,462,400	16,039,500	19,163,900
Current liabilities	9,121,400	11,619,900	13,252,800
Non-current liabilities	833,900	1,610,900	2,272,500
Total liabilities	9,955,300	13,230,800	15,525,300
Net assets	2,507,100	2,808,700	3,638,600
Retained surpluses	2,507,100	2,808,700	3,638,600

Statement of Cash Flows	2023	2022	2021
Net cash from operating activities	(909,500)	233,000	3,654,600
Net cash from investing activities	(386,000)	(243,400)	(137,000)
Net cash from financing activities	(749,000)	(724,500)	(736,700)
Net increase / decrease in cash and cash equivalents	(2,044,500)	(734,900)	2,780,900
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	10,213,600	10,948,500	8,167,600
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	8,169,100	10,213,600	10,948,500

The Summaries of Financial Performance, Financial Position and Cash Flow provided above have been extracted from the audited general purpose financial report of the Sax Institute.

These summaries should be read in conjunction with the full audited Annual Financial Report available on the Sax Institute website.

The Annual Financial Report (from which the summary financial information has been extracted) has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, the Corporations Act 2001, the Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures and the Corporations Regulations 2001.

Figure 1—Sax Institute expenditure 2022-23

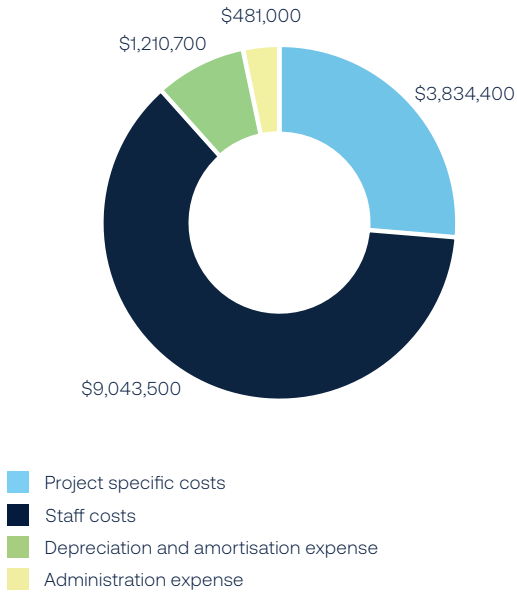


Figure 2—Sax Institute income 2022-23

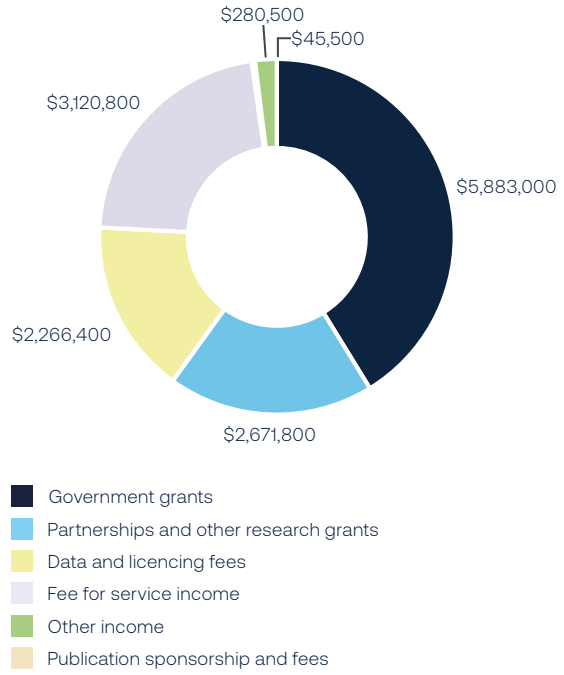
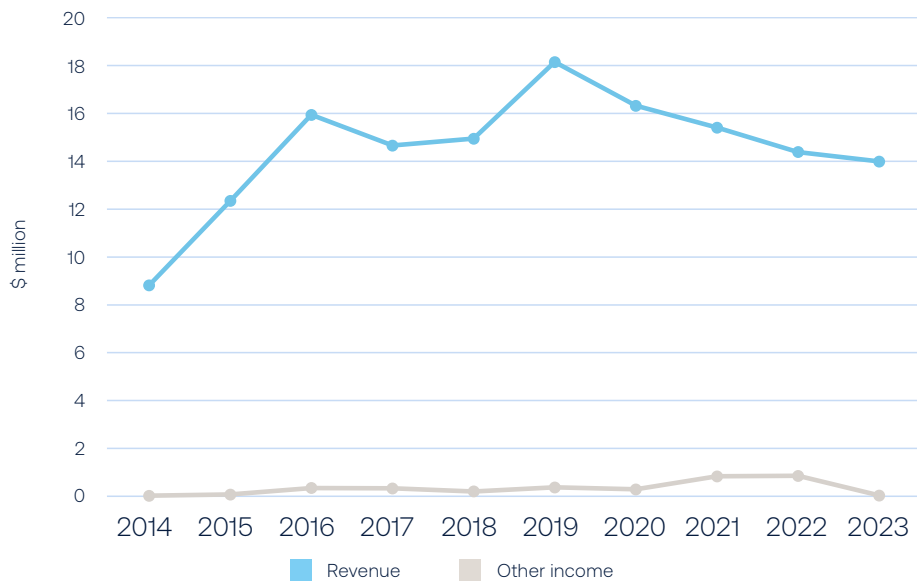


Figure 3—Sax Institute income over time 2014-2023





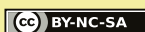
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