



Highlights and activities summary 2020–21

18 October 2021

2020–21 Year in Review

The past year has posed unprecedented challenges for health systems internationally and the Sax Institute is proud to have continued our contributions to inform better and more effective health policy and programs. Below are some highlights of the Institute’s activities over the past year.

Constitution update and financial performance

- In May 2021 the Institute introduced an updated [Constitution](#), which simplified and streamlined membership arrangements and clarified the Institute’s governance.
- The Institute’s financial position continues to be strong, and the organisation ended the 2020–21 year with a strengthened equity position of \$3.6m.

\$ '000	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21
Annual income	15,315	18,439	17,156	16,257
Annual result	44	622	824	809
Equity balance	1,386	2,008	2,830	3,639

Mobilising evidence

- We developed a new program called ‘Pathways to Change’ to support long-term coordinated efforts in areas where evidence suggests changes to practices or services are needed. The first Pathways to Change project was conducted in partnership with the National Centre for Sleep Health Services Research (NCSHSR) and aims to promote the greater use of cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBTi). Evidence shows that CBTi is highly effective in the long term, yet GPs most commonly treat insomnia with benzodiazepines.
- In the past year, our independent peer-reviewed journal, *Public Health Research & Practice*, published special editions on extreme events and on tobacco control, and published papers

on the COVID-19 response, including an influential analysis of the pandemic's impacts on major non-COVID-related healthcare activity in NSW. *PHRP* is now ranked by Scimago as Australia's No. 1 health policy journal – a recognition of its growing reach and impact.

- In partnership with the NSW Mental Health Commission, we delivered a dynamic simulation model that can test the effect on the NSW mental health system of various mental health initiatives, ranging from primary school wellbeing programs housing support.

Impact

- Three fast-turnaround surveys using 32,000 respondents from the 45 and Up Study have been undertaken for the NSW Ministry of Health to gather information about the impact of the pandemic on health, wellbeing, healthcare, lifestyle behaviours, COVID testing and prevention, health literacy, and vaccine attitudes, intentions and uptake. The program is ongoing and results so far have directly informed policy responses in NSW.
- The Sax Institute partnered with NSW Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and the NSW Cancer Institute to form the Cancer and Health Ageing in NSW Older Generations Study (CHANGES), which aims to explore how Aboriginal people understand cancer as part of ageing and how programs and services might be improved.
- In 2020, the Sax Institute introduced a new fast-turnaround evidence review option called Evidence Snapshot, to complement the existing Evidence Check offering. Seventeen Evidence Snapshots were commissioned in 2020–21, with many targeting specific pandemic-related issues, such as physical distancing between hospital patients, and the efficacy of N95, surgical and medical masks in reducing COVID-19 transmission.

Engagement

- The Institute established the Sax Forum to facilitate collaborations between Members.
- In 2020–21 the Institute was awarded a \$1.5 million grant from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) to provide evidence about the effectiveness of Aboriginal-led health programs.
- The Sax Institute's Secure Unified Research Environment (SURE) launched a reform program focusing on flexible, on-demand computing resources that can be quickly scaled to support advanced analysis; hybrid-cloud services; and other technical improvements.

Other contributions to the public COVID-19 response

- The Institute developed a dynamic simulation model to help understand the impact of COVID-19 on hospital resources and resource allocation decisions. A second phase of the work is informing NSW Health's strategic decisions in allocating ICU resources and transferring patients.
- The Institute conducted a formative evaluation of NSW Health's secondary triage initiative for aged care residents, which was introduced in March 2020 to reduce unnecessary low-acuity transfers from residential aged care facilities to hospital emergency departments during the pandemic.