

RMIT Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellowships

A Focus on Futures

RMIT has identified six 'Futures' where it believes it, together with its research partners and stakeholders, are able to effect positive change through the translation of research and knowledge exchange. In turn, this change is built on the foundations of excellent research that embeds systems thinking and design practices.

These six Futures are:

- Connected
- Fairer
- Healthier
- Productive & Creative
- Secure & Resilient
- Sustainable

Connected Futures

Digital access to information has changed almost every aspect of society today, including how we work, how we live, how we connect, how we create. Digital transformation is driven by social, cultural, ethical, creative, economic, health, and environmental change, just as much as by fast-moving and disruptive technologies, such as machine learning and generative AI tools, cyberphysical systems, virtual and augmented reality, cybersecurity, and social media tools. A more connected future requires research that improves environmental, social and governance outcomes through a transformative, equitable and regenerative focus, including greener and leaner approaches, climate-responsive interventions, food justice systems, preventive healthcare, and the workforces of tomorrow.

Fairer Futures

Global housing crises, wealth disparities, forced migration, political polarization, disinformation campaigns, inadequate post-traumatic care, and a precarious workforce are just some of the markers of inequity we see around us. As the world grapples with the implications of climate change, COVID-19, and disruptive technologies including AI tools, society faces heightening inequalities, growing disenfranchisement and intersectional disparity; and entrenched marginalization and disadvantage. A fairer future embraces Indigenous ways of knowing; enshrines equity and justice at every level of policy, governance, and private practice; and gives voice to the experience of intersectional disadvantage within all aspects of people's daily lives.

Healthier Futures

Our ageing population faces myriad growing health issues that impact human and planetary scale health, from urban diseases and mental health problems; to endemic, pandemic and drug-resistant infectious pathogens. The challenges we face are in advancing new medical technologies; enabling better diagnostics for chronic diseases, such as cancers; designing improved preventive measures, such as vaccination, diet and mental health support; and effective approaches to more inclusive and evidence-based health care decision-making. Healthier futures address such challenges in the context of enabling resilient health systems, social inclusion and creative practice, alongside responsive and responsible scientific and social innovation.

Productive & Creative Futures

We face global challenges such as rising inflation, resource scarcity, hyper-competition, continuously evolving workplace expectations, and over-stretched and disrupted supply chains. Meeting these challenges requires design-led innovation and unprecedented creativity to reimagine value creation and capture; build more responsive and resilient supply chains; design more inclusive organisations and workplaces; create environments that support physical and mental health; and adopt humanistic principles alongside digital technologies. Productive and creative futures prioritise sustainable models of business and creative production that decouple human wellbeing from environmental degradation, through circularity and regenerative practices.

Secure & Resilient Futures

Uncertainty, volatility, and disruption have shaped recent decades, from geopolitical shifts and social uprisings to proliferating disasters and system breakdown. The global challenges we face today are formidable: planetary commons, such as water, energy and food, require sophisticated governance and management of demand and supply, reliability of circulations, and far-sighted adaptation to climate change and other emerging conditions. More secure and resilient futures will be founded on a deep understanding of the complex systems in which we live, redesigning and reimplementing robust and ethical systems in a way that builds broad participation, social contracts and learning, to support technical, economic, and social diversity.

Sustainable Futures

We have witnessed human impacts on biodiversity, soil, water, the atmosphere, and climate that are now so severe that fundamental Earth systems are being disrupted, triggering catastrophic disasters for humans and other species. Major challenges facing us today include reversing biodiversity loss; advancing social justice; tackling degradation and pollution; decarbonizing society on a massive scale; reducing consumption, resource use, and waste; protecting and restoring ecological services; and building economies that value nature. We seek research impact to genuinely and effectively enable sustainable and regenerative transitions that emphasise social equity, environmental integrity and economic security for future generations.