

Melbourne Social Equity Institute

COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH NETWORK

March 2026 Speakers



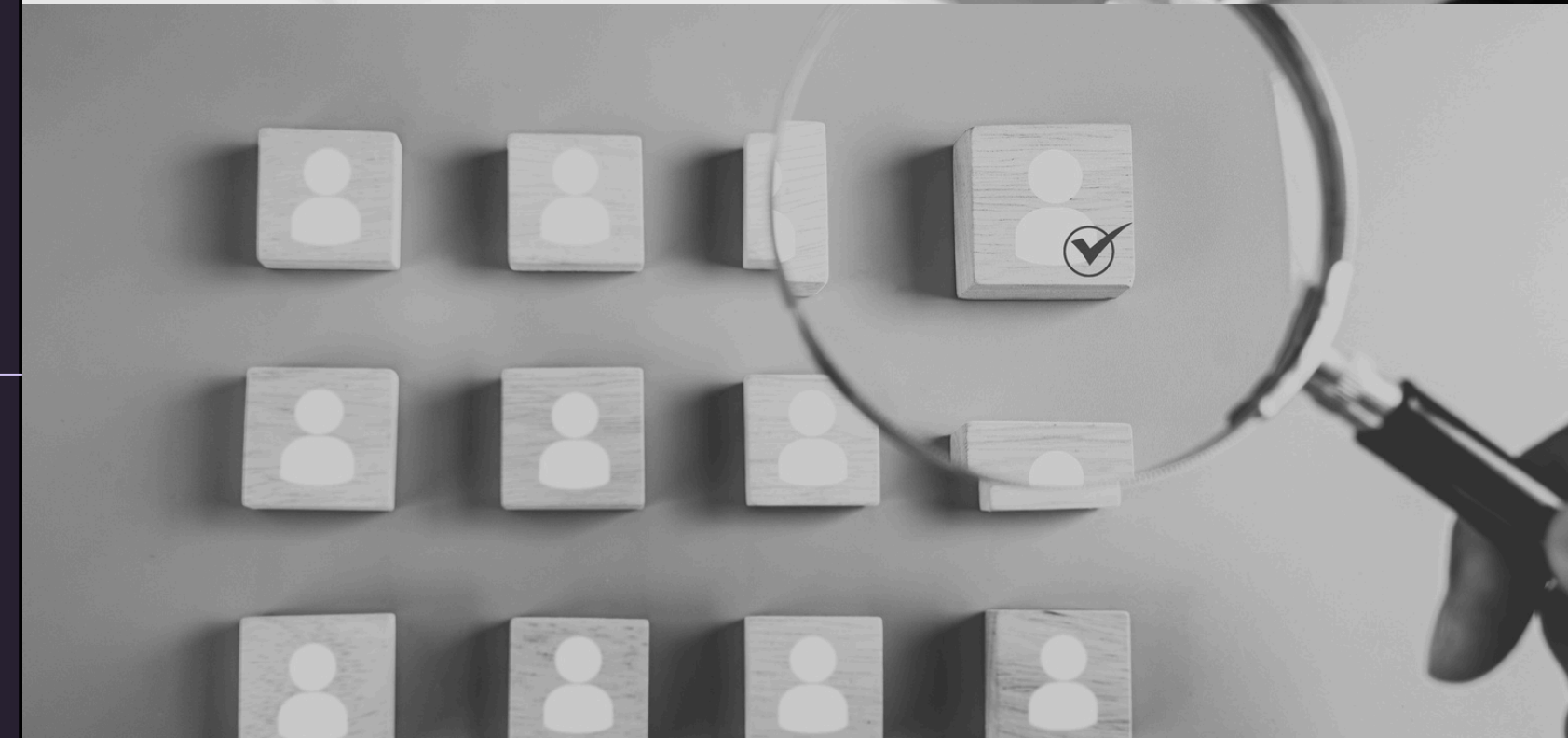
DR NATALIE SHEARD

McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellow,
Melbourne Law School

Algorithm-facilitated discrimination, AI regulation, socio-legal studies

Current Project

- Mapping the Impact of AI in Recruitment for Marginalised Candidates



Contact

n.sheard@unimelb.edu.au
LinkedIn – Natalie Sheard



DR SARAH AUSTIN

Senior Lecturer in Theatre (Contemporary),
ARC DECRA Senior Research Fellow (2026-
2028), Victorian College of the Arts

*Children and young people, rights-based and ethical approaches to
contemporary performance practice, child leadership and cultural agency*

Selected Current & Recent Projects

- An Uncertain Time: Dramaturgical Approaches to Theatre for the Early Years
- Make Some Space: Belonging, Recognition and Relational Safety in Arts Participation with Young People
- Children as Cultural Agents: New Frameworks for Creative Arts Practice (ARC DECRA Project)



[Contact](#)

sarah.austin@unimelb.edu.au



DR NERKEZ OPACIN

Senior Research Fellow in Nature and People, School of Agriculture, Food and Ecosystem Sciences

Nature-based social prescribing, social connection and loneliness, wellbeing and mental health, biodiversity and human–nature relationships, peacebuilding, disaster recovery and community resilience, marginalised communities, migration and refugees, LGBTIQ+ communities, urban nature and cities

Selected Current & Recent Projects

- RECETAS Reimagining Environments for Connection and Engagement: Testing Actions for Social Prescribing in Natural Spaces
- Friends in Nature Casey: Cultivating Connection and Belonging through Living Labs
- Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design
- Study Melbourne Inclusion Program "Effective Stress Reduction in Nature"



Contact

nerkez.opacin@unimelb.edu.au

[LinkedIn – Nerkez Opacin](#)



JEN HARGRAVE

Honorary Research Fellow,
School of Population and Global Health

Community inclusion, service access, social equity, violence prevention and response

Selected Current & Recent Projects

- Improving disability access to cervical cancer self collection
- People with intellectual disabilities' use of social media during emergencies
- Community Visitors' powers in the NDIS landscape
- Co-designing prevention of violence against women with disabilities
- Violence against disabled people prevalence data
- Women and girls' access to the NDIS



Contact

jen.hargrave@unimelb.edu.au
LinkedIn – Jen Hargrave

