Our research explores issues of social cohesion and migration from inter-personal and intergroup interactions to social and economic dynamics at the national and international level. With over 80 academics and more than 50 graduate research students in the faculty working in social cohesion and migration, we are at the forefront of research into the mechanisms of building and sustaining stronger, more resilient communities. Since 2010 we have collaborated with 67 national and international partners to deliver more than 100 projects valued over $10 million. Practical applications of this research include informing policy making, contributing to debate and reporting on trends in social cohesion both here in Australia and internationally.

Research on social exclusion, alienation and community safety explores factors that impede social/community connectedness. In particular the research looks at the social, political, cultural and economic drivers of inequality and marginalisation and the mechanisms associated with community safety. It explores the underlining ideological, religious, political factors and the role of community/media dialogue that might contribute to extremist attitudes and actions and forms of community violence. The role interfaith and multi-faith organisations and networks play in promoting social cohesion, national security, and public safety by mitigating and precluding religious radicalisation is also of central interest to this theme as is the language and dialogue of racial and cultural exclusivism.

Research under this theme has a focus on youth. It examines approaches to developing critical thinking among school age youth and the fostering of respectful and mutually supportive communities.

Critical thinking promotes a form of intellectual resilience that provides young people with the skills to think independently and responsibly, and empowers communities to respond through peaceful democratic means to destructive narratives and misinformation that can undermine social cohesion.

Our research considers the impact of partnerships between local communities and government Institutions, including police and helps to inform the means of building resilient communities which is a crucial factor when it comes to pre-empting and preventing the development of racial, ethnic and religious intolerance.

Our researchers collaborate with government and community organisations, law enforcement institutions and media to deliver projects that generate insights into the processes of alienation and exclusion and identify alternative approaches to responding to and resolving community divisions. Projects under this theme have contributed to better counter-terrorism policy-making and practice; explored how big media outlets report on terrorism; and delivered training for members of law enforcement.

CASE STUDY OVERLEAF:
SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN MELBOURNE COMMUNITIES
Population growth from increased immigration is changing the cultural, economic and physical landscapes of urban neighbourhoods. These changes can pose major challenges for the development and maintenance of neighbourhood networks and social inclusion as some residents view immigration as a strain on economic resources and a threat to Australian identity and values.

Countering social exclusion can only succeed if initiatives address the underlying factors associated with related attitudes and actions. Evidence from other countries suggests that socially harmful exclusivist clusters in neighbourhoods, especially segregated neighbourhoods and those with large proportions of non-whites. Yet in Australia, and specifically Victoria, we know little about the spatial concentration of socially harmful exclusivism, nor do we know how and under what conditions these socially exclusive attitudes lead to potentially harmful or violent actions.

This study brings together a multi-disciplinary team to examine ethnic diversity and its association with socially harmful exclusivist attitudes and actions across 150 Melbourne neighbourhoods. Drawing on longitudinal survey and administrative data, it identifies the neighbourhood and individual level characteristics that influence socially harmful exclusivism over time and assesses the protective role of social cohesion in preventing socially harmful exclusivism across these areas.

Results from this research will be translated into significant program and policy contributions. Specifically they will:
- provide an evidence base for policy and practice concerned with changing harmful narratives, encouraging greater inter-ethnic contact, increasing prosocial activities/actions and decreasing tolerance for harmful or indeed violent incidents in urban neighbourhoods;
- highlight the risk and protective factors associated with socially harmful exclusivist attitudes and actions; and
- inform the development of targeted community level programs aimed at enhancing social inclusion.