



# SOULAB NEWSLETTER

**Image:** Nazia Ahmed, Dr Jananie William, Kristina Popova Livrinski, and Annie Brett grin widely at the camera in their SICON2023 shirts after the excitement of the flagship event at the National Museum of Australia.

## And that's a wrap for SICON2023

SICON2023 Our future with AI: From science fiction to social fiction was an absolute blast.

The flagship event 'AI and Poverty Alleviation' was our first ever in person event for SICON! We had an incredible time learning how AI can be used to alleviate poverty with renowned thought leaders.

Professor Israr Qureshi delivered the keynote, exploring the effectiveness of AI in marginalised contexts and explained where AI is currently best suited in the development sector. Panel 1 'Latest Developments in AI and the threats and opportunities for social outcomes' brought together Professor Israr Qureshi, André Diez de Aux, and Monica Kempster to discuss AI in the domains of education, data analytics, and marginalisation. Ben Gales and Nazia Ahmed discussed how poverty will be influenced by advancements in AI for Panel 2 'AI's potential impact on poverty'. Panelists Nancy Chang,

### HERE'S WHAT'S UP!

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Dr. Shamaruh Mirza, Kylie Flament, and Dr. Shyam Barr joined forces for panel 3 'Exploring a world of possibilities - AI and social innovation'. Panelists talked about innovation in the social enterprise, health, education, and environmental sectors. Scribe Gavin Blake captured the ideas and discussions of the panels in visual form. Attendees even got together and shared their ideas on how AI can be used to alleviate poverty.

The webinar on 'Generative AI and Education' with Leon Furze left us buzzing with excitement to see how AI will continue to be applied to education settings to improve outcomes for learners. One of our biggest takeaways was that generative AI can increase access to education, but only if we invest in the best technology, training, and support for educators and learners.

We wrapped up SICON2023 with 'Closing Connections: Closing Session and Networking Event'. The closing session was hosted at Café Stepping Stone Dickson. As it was World Social Enterprise Day, co-founder and owner, Vanessa Brettell sat down with us to chat about their social enterprise journey and to offer some tips to inspiring social entrepreneurs. We then played a quick round of networking bingo before jumping into our final panel discussion on 'AI and Social Impact'. Dr. Jenny Davis and Dr. Ahmed Imran shed some light on what AI for social good could look like. Dr. Imran discussed the implications of AI and digital inequality whilst Dr. Davis talked about the power and materialistic nature of AI. We finished the night off with cake, as not only was it the closing session for the Social Innovation Conference, but it was also the celebration of eight years of SOULAB.

Throughout the conference, we sought to answer the question: 'How do we design a world where AI is used to achieve social good?'. It was not a simple question. And like most complex questions, the answer was equally complex and multi-faceted. AI for social good, is an ideal we can work towards. AI has the ability to close disadvantage gaps and provide solutions for problems previously difficult to solve. But it will require vigilance and careful consideration of when we decide to apply it to a situation and when we don't, to ensure that we do not widen disadvantage gaps for already disadvantaged people and instead uplift them.

The conversation on how we use AI to achieve social good isn't over, although SICON is. In 2024, SOULAB will hold monthly webinars on social good topics, including AI focused topics.

To check out the ideas shared throughout SICON2023, join the [Social Innovation Network](#) on LinkedIn.

Want to replay a session? [Dive back in.](#)

A massive thank you to all our speakers, facilitators, partners, photographers, and scribe. This incredible event would not have been possible without you.

# SICON2023 snapshots



**Image:** Dr Shamaruh Mirza, Nancy Chang, Dr Shyam Barr, Kylie Flament, and Nazia Ahmed sit on high stools at the end of the panel 'Exploring a world of possibilities'.



**Image:** Prof. Israr Qureshi, André Diez de Aux, and Dr Jananie William are all turned towards Monica Kempster, listening as she speaks for the panel 'Latest developments in AI and the threats and opportunities for social outcomes'.



**Image:** Vanessa Brettell speaks about Café Stepping Stone's social enterprise journey, as Nazia Ahmed listens with a smile.



**Image:** Dr Jenny Davis and Dr Ahmed Imran listen to Nazia Ahmed speak (off camera). Dr Davis holds a microphone to speak next for the panel 'AI and Social Impact'.



**Image:** Attendees at 'Creating Creations' are spread throughout Café Stepping Dickson, chatting amongst themselves as they race to see who will win networking bingo.

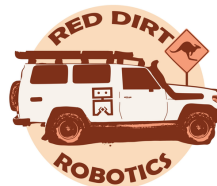


**Image:** MC's Kristina Popova Livrinski and Annie Brett, SOULAB team members, kick-off 'Creating Connections'. Annie speaks into the microphone, as Kristina grins at attendees.

## Projects we are working on

SOULAB is currently working on a wide range of projects. Our projects cover issue areas from youth justice, mental health, and community services across a range of incredible organisations. The types of projects we are working on include:

- Process, outcomes, and economic evaluations
- Impact assessment
- Strategic reviews



# Social impact projects

## ABC Heywire Trailblazer's Theory of Change



ABC Heywire's Trailblazer program is for young changemakers dedicated to making regional Australia even better. The program supports young people in sharing their work, ideas and projects on a national platform and receive a package of supports. Back in 2020, SOULAB, in partnership with the ANU, conducted an impact evaluation of the program. Now, we are joining forces with ABC Heywire to offer two young changemakers the opportunity to develop a Theory of Change for their project. We have picked out two young changemakers - Amy Tobin founder of Now I Can Run and Jameson Harvey founder of Red Dirt Robotics. We look forward to working with these fabulous young changemakers on their social impact journey.



**Image:** Jameson Harvey smiles widely at the camera as he holds a robot that he uses for the Red Dirt Robotics program.

Red Dirt Robotics  
 Founder, Jameson Harvey, 2022 Trailblazer

**Red Dirt Robotics** is a regional and remote outreach program empowering the next generation of young engineers through coding and robotics. Jameson's goal is all about "closing the gap between the education disparity in robotics and STEM between these metropolitan areas with those in remote and regional areas".



**Image:** Amy Tobin poses on a racerunner, dressed in sports gear, showcasing the opportunities Now I Can Run creates for people with disabilities.

Now I Can Run  
 Founder, Amy Tobin, 2023 Trailblazer

**Now I Can Run** creates opportunities for people with disabilities to participate and work in group sporting events. They offer opportunities to people with disabilities through employment, running and athletics. Amy's goal is "to create a low-cost device to make it accessible to all people with disabilities, not just cerebral palsy, because we all deserve the opportunity to run, just like you".

## Her Kitchen Table (HKT)



HKT is our social enterprise empowering migrant women through cooking, the sharing of stories and culture, promoting social cohesion, and providing economic opportunities.

2023 was a jammed-packed year for HKT - here are just a few of the things we got up to!

We co-ran a stall at the ACT Volunteering Expo with our sister social enterprise, Café Stepping Stone. Our Meal Artists whipped up a range of snacks, mains, and desserts to keep the hungry expo-goers happy. We also welcomed two new Meal Artists into HKT, with some of their food debuting at the expo.

We catered the Community Services Directorate's Director-General Awards, with attendees absolutely raving about all the delicious bites.

The Capital Region Community Services hosted the grand opening of their new social venture, Social Bean Cafe & Emporium, with a HKT kitchen takeover. Community members flocked to the event and couldn't get enough of Sakina's aushak among many other dishes. We plan to collaborate with CRCS in 2024 to bring home-cooked meals from around the world to the CRCS' community.

For 2024, our sights are on acquiring our own venue and developing training courses for Meal Artists. It will be a place for our Meal Artist to cook and improve their skills, and interact with our customer base.

[BOOK A CATERING](#)



**Image:** The HKT and CRCS team smiling brightly after a successful HKT kitchen takeover.

# HKT snapshots



**Images:**

[Left] Entree size Aushak (afghan dumplings) with a tangy sauce and yogurt dressing plated and ready for service for the HKT Kitchen Takeover.

[Right] Catering boxes of Pakora, Kalojam Dumpling, and Pide for the Community Service Directorate's Director-General Awards.



**Images:**

[Left] Rej, a debuting meal artist, preparing an order of Fuchka, a Bangladeshi street food, for the ACT Volunteering Expo.

[Right] The HKT and Cafe Stepping Stone teams prepare a range of dishes for the hungry Expo goers.

# Interview with Hana Zaarour: insights on leveraging a trauma informed approach to interview young people



**Hana Zaarour**  
(She/Her)

Principal psychologist at  
Signature Psychology and  
Consultancy services /  
SOULAB SME

Hana, alongside Nazia Ahmed, Danny Mikati, and Carly Stanley, interviewed young people with justice system experience for the DCJ project. Hana sat down with us to explain what a trauma informed approach is, how it was applied for the DCJ project, and her advice for people wanting to apply a trauma informed approach to their work.

## ***What is a trauma informed approach and why is it important?***

Being trauma informed allows you to approach your engagement with others through the lense of curiosity, respect, and collaboration. Above all you as the engager hold a safe space for the individual. A space that actively acknowledges the stories that define a person, the richness of wisdom that each person holds. It requires humility, to unpack the power dynamic that exists within services and validate that the individual is the expert on their life. Your role is to recognise diversity, that empowerment exists in establishing safety and that self agency and determination is driven by the individual and validated through recognition of such.

The concept of trauma is defined beyond the bounds of primary trauma, it encompasses all the ways trauma manifests and imprints on the development of the person. That trauma can be direct, indirect, intergenerational, intersectional and above all has the capacity to not only interfere with the process of engagement but can revisit in times of engagement. Being trauma informed requires every effort to acknowledge the impact of trauma and to avoid primary traumatisation.

It is critical within the Australian context that the concept of trauma cannot be defined without acknowledging the inherent and implicit trauma experienced by first nations peoples. Self-determination as a concept cannot be honoured without acknowledging the cultural diversity and traditions that define first nations belief systems. Recognising that multiple nations and communities that exists within the umbrella of "First Nations people". Any non-Indigenous engager requires not only input and consultation with an Indigenous contributor but ongoing review of practices that are dynamic and change to reflect the current population needs.



## Interview with Hana Zaarour (cont.)

### ***How did you apply the trauma informed approach when speaking with young people in the justice system?***

A trauma informed approach particularly with young people engaged in the justice system pivoted off recognising the pre existing power dynamic and how it may impact on feelings of safety. Establishing safety was achieved through the invitation process, ensuring that the young person was informed and supported to activate their agency to make choices in how they would engage, informing them of their rights and ensuring that they could access support pre, during and post engagement.

Establishing a lens of curiosity opened up pathways of engagement. We found that young people were eager to talk, they wanted to share their stories, for their voices to be heard. It is through this lens that young people entrusted us with their vulnerabilities, experiences, hopes and above all their wisdom.

### ***The environments that most of the consultations occurred in were heavily associated with stressful experiences, court and correctional facilities. How did a trauma informed approach help to overcome this to make young people feel safe and want to open up?***

A trauma informed framework allowed us to view the young person outside the dominant narrative. This framework transformed the hesitant young person into the author of their own story, they shared not only their story but more importantly their wisdom on how to improve the system in the hope that they may change things for others.

As one of the consultants it was a privilege to have a young person share their journey, the richness of their experience, their wisdom and amazing insights and willingness to help others despite the circumstances they were currently faced with. As feelings of safety increased stories shifted from the third person to the first person, body language changed and the words began to flow. The dominant narrative of the young violent offender, the law breaker quickly fell away as they shared their hopes and dreams. Those who shared their hopes for tomorrow were often filled with a desire for change, to break cycles of poverty, to access opportunities and to be better.

As trauma informed framework highlighted a commonality among the complexities of their stories we began to understand the complexities of the system we were actively seeking to change.

### ***What advice would you give to people wanting to implement a trauma informed approach in their work?***

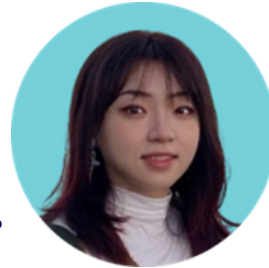
Establishing a trauma informed framework is only possible if it aligns with your beliefs as a service provider. Beyond the definitions and frameworks, it requires recognition and active challenges to your own pre existing biases and opening up your engagement to allow the individual to drive their own process. It can only manifest with authenticity that aligns with a desire to see the individual as the expert on their life. Space must be provided for the individual to author their own story and ultimately honouring that you are the holder of a story, one that may be only told once.

A LOT HAPPENED IN 2023. WE WANTED TO TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON ALL THE INCREDIBLE ACTIVITIES AND PEOPLE THAT WERE PART OF SOULAB'S 2023 JOURNEY.

## YEAR IN REVIEW



We developed SOULAB's five year strategy.



We had Bell Dai intern with us. She worked on a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project.



We said thank you and goodbye to our COO, Shadab Parvez. He is focusing on new and exciting adventures in Bangladesh.



We refreshed the SOULAB logo.



We hosted our first in-person SICON event at the National Museum of Australia for SICON2023.



We celebrated 8 years of SOULAB.

And of course throughout all of this we got to undertake fantastic projects...

We cannot wait to see what 2024 will bring!



## Acknowledgement of Country

The Social Outcomes Lab acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the traditional owners of the country throughout Australia. We pay our respect to the first people of this country and to elders past and present. We are dedicated to working with Aboriginal communities and seek to learn from their rich culture and knowledge.