



## STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2021 - 2026

The Development Studies Association of Australia (DSAA) was formally incorporated in March 2019. Since its inception, the association has focused on identifying and creating opportunities to strengthen the discipline of Development Studies, both within Australia and globally. We defined our Aims and Objectives in the three core areas of Teaching, Research and Engagement, as below:

### **Mission**

The purpose of DSAA is to promote critical inquiry, reflection, research, teaching and the value of Development Studies in Australia. The DSAA seeks to facilitate collaborations and engagement within and beyond the academy.

### **Aims and Objectives**

#### **Research**

- Generate and cultivate knowledges in the field of Development Studies through research and research training
- Achieve recognition of Development Studies as a distinct field of study and research in Australia
- Facilitate scholarly co-operation and collaboration contributing to the democratisation of knowledge about development through purposeful engagement with marginalised scholars, and perspectives
- Promote associational life among scholars and researchers in Australia across all disciplines conducting research for or about development

#### **Teaching**

- Promote and support the academic study and teaching of Development Studies in Australia
- Build cross-institutional collaboration in Development Studies teaching and learning

#### **Engagement**

- Promote dialogue and create space for debate around research and thinking for and about development, as well as provide avenues for the wide dissemination of research findings through the organisation of, for example, conferences, workshops, journals, working papers and other initiatives
- Be a hub for expertise to governments, development agencies, the private sector, media and civil society organisations regarding issues in development around the world
- Promote a voice and enhance the presence of Australian Development Studies in relevant national and international forums
- Facilitate dialogue between academia, policy and practice

An important core value that underlies all our work is the DSAA's [Statement on Respectful Relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Country.](#)

The **DSAA Five-Year Strategic Action Plan** seeks to operationalise our Aims and Objectives, as well as our values with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The preparation of this Strategic Action Plan involved several member consultations organised in September – October 2020 (For details, see ['Towards 2025: A report on consultations to develop DSAA's 5-year Strategy'](#)), followed by a series of workshops within the DSAA Executive Committee. These consultations and workshops produced valuable insights for understanding the context, opportunities and challenges that Development Studies faces in

Australia. One of the principal challenges identified was the ‘identity challenge’ of Development Studies in Australia. As a relatively recently defined inter-disciplinary field of study distinctively situated at the intersection of policy and theory, and at both the global and the local levels, Development Studies often finds considerable difficulty to establish disciplinary boundaries from other social sciences, and cement a clear disciplinary identity. Notwithstanding the difficulties that such lack of a cohesive identity brings, this broad challenge also offers a crucial opportunity to consider and strengthen the discipline’s core values, and opens a unique space for the DSAA to contribute to the establishment of the Development Studies community in Australia. Importantly, it gives the opportunity to reflectively embed these values in our work as an association.

As part of the conversations thinking through the identity of the discipline, a recurring issue emerging from the multiple consultations pointed toward the need to prioritise critical reflection on the discipline and, in particular, to lead initiatives connected to the revalorisation of local and indigenous knowledges. These discussions also highlighted the importance of engaging active processes to decolonise the discipline and to strengthen a development studies community putting forward values of care, inclusivity and justice. These challenges occur across the multiple domains in which the DSAA works, including teaching, research and engagement. More broadly, they are connected to important efforts happening within the global discipline, connected to rethinking the core values that guide development studies. Given the inextricable way in which the subject matter of our discipline is connected to structural power imbalances deeply embedded in a colonial past, highlighting and valuing sidelined knowledges can become a crucial and intersecting priority in our strategic plan. Critically reflecting on these key issues through the Strategic Action Plan allows us to both address the key challenge of delineating the identity of development studies in Australia and to prioritise and connect our strategic efforts, providing cohesion to the very diverse set of initiatives and projects that we have planned.

The Strategic Action Plan presented below identifies **Goals** and **Activities** in 5 broad domains: **1) Research, 2) Teaching, 3) Engagement, 4) Indigenous Strategy** and **5) Operational and Financial**. While we have already begun progressing several key activities (for instance, an biennial Conference, the Development Studies FoR codes and Editorship of the journal *Development in Practice*), several other activities are aspirational, and we aim to achieve them in the medium-term. Two further points to be noted are, first, that the overlap in some activities is intentional, to create synergies and collaborations between goals. Second, while the goals of our Indigenous Strategy are also embedded in Research, Teaching and Engagement, we also thought it important to separately articulate an Indigenous Strategy, to ensure our focused attention to this important agenda.

# 1 Research Strategy

Goals	Activities
<b>Facilitate Critical Development Dialogues</b>	
	Create spaces for critical reflection on Development Studies
	Clarify linkages between development and humanitarian studies/practice
	Promote decolonisation and localisation of research practices and knowledge production
<b>Share and promote Member research</b>	
	Promote member research through DSAA newsletters, twitter and social media
	Create open access database of member research shared on DSAA website
	Create member access only repository of successful grant applications
	Circulate opportunities for collaborative grant applications
	Create Public research profile of members
<b>Improve the standing of Development Studies as a discipline in Australia</b>	
	Clarify, publicise, and promote the use of Development Studies FoR codes
	Maintain a ranked list of Development Studies journals
	Manage Editorship of, and promote, the journal <i>Development in Practice</i>
	Advocate for Development Studies to Australian universities and government
<b>Build research networks and collaborations</b>	
	Organise DSAA biennial conferences (internal to DSAA)
	Support Thematic interest/Regional cluster groups (internal to DSAA)
	Organise meetings with Regional associations (external to DSAA)
	Co-convene conferences with organisations in Asia and the Pacific (external to DSAA)
	Network with Universities in the Global South (external to DSAA)
	Collaborate with other DS associations in Europe, Canada, UK and the global South (external to DSAA)
	Organise regular 'Coffee and catch-up' Drop-in conversations for DSAA members
	Create links across other disciplinary areas (e.g. panels at conferences)
<b>Translate Development Studies research to praxis</b>	
	Promote <i>Viewpoints</i> and <i>Practice Notes</i> in journal <i>Development in Practice</i>
	Create research vignettes for DSAA Pedagogy blog
	Advocate for aid funding, aid policies

<b>Amplify and revalorise knowledges in local contexts</b>	
	Profile examples of strongly decolonising research practice in DSAA newsletter
	Promote co-publishing with Global South scholars
	Enhance linkages between critical studies, Indigenous Knowledges, decolonisation and practice
<b>Promote and Support HDR and Early Career Researchers in Development Studies</b>	
	Support HDR program led by HDRs (including reading group/s, workshops and talks on topics like: getting published, DECRA advice, going into the field, thesis trad vs publication).
	Provide funding for students to attend conferences
	Awards to recognise HDR and ECR Best paper and thesis

## 2 Teaching Strategy

Goals	Activities
<b>Promote Development Studies as a teaching Discipline</b>	
	Seek to become a course accrediting professional body
	Expand scope of pedagogy blog by creating podcasts/ snapshots of research-led teaching of development studies subjects
	Establish core Development Studies competencies/Foundational Curricula
<b>Decolonise Development Studies curricula</b>	
	Establish networks with indigenous scholars
	Connect with Indigenous community development orgs/actors/scholars
	Share teaching resources to enhance and promote inclusion of indigenous knowledge
	Share teaching resources to enhance and promote inclusion of global south and its knowledge
	Prepare a guidebook/checklist for decolonising curricula
	Include development models from the South in our teaching
<b>Collaborate with Development Studies academics</b>	
	Share Teaching Resources (internal)
	Share Teaching Resources with academics in the global south (external)
	Create Teaching Case Study Resources
	Create Thematic Reading Lists
	Engage with vocational education sector esp. community development courses
	Organise regular 'Coffee and catch-up' Drop-in conversations for members
<b>Facilitate Student Engagement in Development Studies</b>	
	Facilitate Development Studies Student Network (Domestic and International)
	Establish links with Australia Award Alumnae
	Profile HDR students in newsletter / social media
	Organise Career Expo for students at DSAA conference
<b>Facilitate Industry Collaboration</b>	
	Facilitate Industry sponsorships /internships for students through DSAA
	Facilitate Industry participation at Career Expo for students at DSAA conference

### 3 Engagement Strategy

Goals	Activities
<b>Grow and sustain membership</b>	
	Organise regular 'Coffee and catch-up' Drop-in conversations for members
	Reach out to members for periodic consultation
	Conduct periodic Member surveys
<b>Raise the profile of DSAA</b>	
	Clarify, publicise and promote the use of Development Studies FoR codes
	Seek to become a course accrediting professional body
	Link with Australia Award alumnae
	Facilitate Industry sponsorships through DSAA
	Issue statements on important issues relevant to DSAA members
	Advocate for Development Studies to universities and government
<b>Network with development organisations</b>	
	Network with NGOs/INGOs/UN agencies
	Foster links with diaspora community organisations
	Foster links with vocational education sector esp. community development courses
	Seek collaborative partnerships and/or networking with other groups in Australia (e.g. RDI Network critical development studies network), and internationally (e.g. DevNet and global south institutions/groups)
	Partner with ACFID/RDI, etc in advocacy campaigns for funding to the sector and on aid policy
	Participate in meetings of regional associations (AMSEAS, SASA etc)
	Establish network with academics from the Global South
	Facilitate Industry participation at Career Expo for Students at DSAA conference
<b>Engagement with Students</b>	
	Create database of Internships/ placements/volunteering opportunities through DSAA
	Facilitate DS Student Network (Domestic and International)
	Establish links with Australia Award Alumnae
	Profile HDR students in newsletter / social media
	Organise Career Expo for students at DSAA conference

## 4 Indigenous Strategy

These strategy goals are the actions arising from the DSAA Statement toward Respectful Relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Country

Goals	Activities
<b>Amplify Indigenous voices including development issues impacting Indigenous communities nationally and globally</b>	
	Make statements on issues pertaining to Indigenous communities nationally and internationally e.g. Black Lives Matter, Jukaan Gorge
	Promote Indigenous perspectives in newsletter/social media
	Profile HDR students in newsletter / social media
<b>DSAA conference is a way to demonstrate respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Country</b>	
	Conference organising committee to develop relationships with local Aboriginal community
	Conference organising committee to engage Indigenous suppliers where possible
	Conference to include Indigenous perspectives and encourage attendance of Indigenous researchers
<b>Reflect on decolonising practices, through pedagogy, research and relationships with Indigenous communities</b>	
	Support members be better versed in Indigenous perspectives and how to build this into their DS curricula and research
	Familiarise members with Indigenous research methodologies and other research materials to support their own research or support them to supervise Indigenous students
	Establish networks with Indigenous scholars who could be more involved with DSAA
	Connect with Indigenous community development orgs/actors/scholars
	Strengthen engagement with Indigenous studies departments and organisations

## 5 Operational and Financial Strategy

Goals	Activities
<b>Ensure organisational and financial sustainability</b>	
	Ensure compliance with Association rules
	Ensure solvency, and compliance with financial regulations
<b>Ensure Member active involvement</b>	
	Conduct AGMs
	Undertake Activities in Research, Teaching and Engagement
	Maintain updated website
	Maintain media and comms presence
<b>Ensure committee member active involvement</b>	
	Undertake regular Committee meetings
	Undertake clear induction/handover notes for new members on roles and responsibilities, and Committee operation modalities
	Undertake periodic review of Committee operations modalities
	Undertake periodic Committee health checks to ensure members feel engaged/valued