

ABSTRACT

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Title: The significance of linkages for the uptake of research in social policy making

Better connections between academics and social policy makers have long been considered important for promoting pathways for research into social policy making contexts and, in doing so, improving the policy use of this research. Efforts to enhance connections have involved both measures to create and strengthen direct linkages between academics and social policy makers, and knowledge brokering strategies by third parties aimed at facilitating research transfer and uptake. This paper will report on a PhD research project that has explored the significance of these connections – or linkages – in supporting research-informed understandings of policy issues, and in designing and implementing policy initiatives. The PhD research project drew on large-scale surveys and in-depth interview data collected both from Australian academic social researchers and public servant policy makers (in federal and state government departments) as part of a broader ARC Linkage funded project on evidence-based social policy making in Australia. Using a mixed methodology the PhD project endeavoured to map the types of linkages predominant between academics and policy makers, to identify the key barriers and facilitators to developing and sustaining these linkages, and to explore the relevance of linkages in supporting research utilisation in social policy making. This paper presents key findings to research questions, highlights important themes and issues, and concludes by beginning to consider what this might all mean for using linkages more strategically to support the policy uptake of social research evidence.