

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2023**



## COSSI ANNUAL REPORT 2023

### Introduction

The [Collaboration on Social Science and Immunisation \(COSSI\)](#) is a collective of researchers, healthcare professionals, people working in immunisation policy and practice, and consumer representatives who work collaboratively to improve vaccine acceptance and uptake.

COSSI was established by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) and the University of Sydney in 2016.

### What does COSSI do?

The aim of COSSI is to better inform Australian immunisation policy and practice with high-quality evidence from the social sciences.

The objectives of the network are to:

- facilitate communication and collaboration between those working in the social science of immunisation
- share research and findings
- build capacity in research, evaluation and translation.

COSSI activities include regular knowledge exchange meetings, seminars/webinars, and occasional in-person meetings and workshops. Members can also communicate with each other via the COSSI email list, which currently has 301 members.

### COSSI Governance Committee members as at December 2023

Katie Attwell (Chair)

Jess Kaufman (Deputy Chair)

Margie Danchin

Holly Seale

Julie Leask

Catherine Hughes

Kerrie Wiley

Jane Frawley

Katrina Clark

### **COSSI Governance Committee members as at December 2023 (cont.)**

Patrick Cashman

Jody Stephenson

Elizabeth Harwood

Kylie Taylor

Samantha Carlson

Paige Wood-Kenney

Nicole Batten

Josh Karras

Catherine King

Kasia Bolsewicz

Maryke Steffens

Ikram Abdi

### **NCIRS Secretariat support**

Kathleen Prokopovich

Bianca Bullivant

Corina Sheils

Justin Boxall

### **Updating COSSI's governance**

Deputy Chair Jess Kaufman led a sub-committee of the Steering Committee to review and update the COSSI governance guidelines in 2023.

These guidelines clarify the roles, election procedures and voting procedures of the Chair, Deputy Chair and Steering Committee.

The guidelines also describe the newly formed Student and Early Career Researcher Network (described further below).

The new guidelines were ratified by the Steering Committee on 26 February 2024.

## Events

### NSW Health Behavioural Science and Health Communication Advisory Group

- *Date:* Ongoing
- *Description:* In December 2021, the NSW Ministry of Health established a Behavioural Science and Communications Advisory Group to provide advice from behavioural science and health communication experts to inform and optimise initiatives managed by the Population and Public Health Division of the Ministry.

The Group, which was chaired by Dr Kerry Chant, had the aim of providing a forum for policy teams to seek expert advice on new and emerging evidence and its implications for population health policies and programs.

The Ministry invited COSSI members Katrina Clark, Maryke Steffens, Kasia Bolsewicz and Julie Leask to contribute expert advice on respiratory illness and vaccination behavioural insights, including relating to paediatric influenza vaccines.

### COSSI Student and Early Career Researchers Network event

- *Date:* 19 June 2023
- *Description:* The COSSI Student and Early Career Researchers Network held an inaugural free, multi-faceted event during the Communicable Diseases and Immunisation Conference (CDIC) 2023 in Perth.

Mid- and late-career researchers in the field shared general advice before partaking in group and one-on-one mentoring sessions with early career researchers, discussing and advising on many issues pertaining to professional, academic and professional growth in the field.

## COSSI Knowledge Exchange Meetings (online)

Meeting	Date
<p>'Peer-to-peer communication about vaccines using motivational interviewing'</p> <p><i>Presenter:</i> Dr Ikram Abdi</p>	27 February 2023
<p>'Embedding social science into public health and disease control: Informing best practice for a future Australian Centre for Disease Control'</p> <p><i>Presenter:</i> Dr Kerrie Wiley</p>	28 August 2023
<p>'Project updates from the Australian Regional Immunisation Alliance (ARIA)'</p> <p><i>Presenters:</i> Dr Jess Kaufman, Associate Professor Jane Frawley, Dr Kerrie Wiley, Belle Overmars</p>	30 October 2023

## Selected policy engagement

A meeting took place with representatives of the Australian Government regarding the work of COSSI, and input was given regarding the Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC).

Margie Danchin, Kerrie Wiley, Katie Attwell, Julie Leask, Catherine King, Emma Campbell, Jane Frawley and Nicole Batten either participated in this work or represented COSSI in discussion with Jacob Madden of the Commonwealth CDC establishment team (Department of Health and Aged Care) on 14 November 2023.

The purpose of the meeting was to allow the COSSI team to:

- provide input on approaches to social science in public health
- offer insights into functional considerations for inclusion of social science in CDC decision processes and governance, based on COSSI research into international best practice examples.

The COSSI team outlined the project undertaken to inform inclusion of social science in the structure of the CDC, in which data were triangulated across three main areas: a scoping review of global best practice and review of grey literature pertaining to other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries' CDCs or similar organisations, key informant interviews to understand the CDCs' structure and function, and how social science is used to inform decision-making in the relevant countries.

The key informant interviews provide perspectives from international academic and government professionals involved in pandemic public health responses.

These data, which have previously been utilised in relevant consultations in 19 OECD countries, will help to inform the proposed structure and ensure the Australian CDC aligns with global best practice.

## Online engagement

- *X (formerly Twitter) – @COSSI\_Vaccine:*
  - 826 followers
  - The COSSI Steering Committee made the decision to cease operating the COSSI Twitter account in 2023, due to the lack of appropriate moderation and safeguards following its transition to X.
  - COSSI launched a LinkedIn profile in early 2024:  
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/collaboration-on-social-science-and-immunisation>
- *COSSI website:*
  - 1,193 page views (Jan – December 2023)
  - Average time on webpage: 55 seconds
- *COSSI Student and Early Career Researchers Network (established December 2022):*
  - All new members are offered the opportunity to self-identify as a student or early career researcher and invited to join.
  - 21 students and early career researchers joined.
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cossisercn>

## How to join COSSI

Anyone with an interest in social science and immunisation can join COSSI. Many of our members are health professionals who deliver and communicate about immunisation regularly. Some members work in public health policy or in government. Others are academic researchers, lecturers or students interested in different aspects of social science and immunisation. Some members represent consumers.

**Join COSSI:** <https://www.ncirs.org.au/cossi/join-cossi>

**Contact COSSI:** [cossi.aus@gmail.com](mailto:cossi.aus@gmail.com)